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RENAISSANCE

EMANUEL WINTERITZ
Leonardo da Vinci as a Musician
Yale University Press.
£30.00 (hbk) £10.00 (pbk)

In a passage in the *Treatato dell'arte de la pittura*, published in 1584, the blind Venetian theorist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo proposed a novel approach to the traditional medieval iconography of the Nine Choirs of Music. Each choir, he recommended, should be devoted to a single instrument represented in each case by three of its most famous practitioners. There are echoes here of any number of Lomazzo's programmes (Gaurico's scheme for the series of Muses done by Angelo da Siena and Cosimo Tura for Lorenzo d'Este's *studia* at Belfiore comes immediately to mind), but the severity of Lomazzo's proposal lies in the suggestion that the figures represented should be drawn not from the Bible or classical mythology but from among contemporaries or near-contemporaries. Lomazzo's own shortlist of the celestial twenty-seven is an interesting document of taste, being partly a celebration of Milanese musicians and partly stale formulas of the day. His fourth choir, made up of players of the *lira*, is headed by 'il maestro Leonardo Vinci pittore' in the company of Alfonso della Viola and Alessandro Striggio, father of the most highly praised virtuoso of his day.

By the time that the *Treatato* was written, the image of Leonardo as musician had become firmly established through the received view of him as *uomo universale* as much as through the biographical efforts of Paolo Giovio and Vasari's famous description of Leonardo's performance before Galeazzo Sforza. Sources closer to the artist are more reticent about his musical skills, and it is notable that in contrast to the work of biographers, descriptions of Leonardo's musical life make no room for scepticism about the truth of his expertise there. It is little doubt that he did actually play the *lira da braccio*, an instrument in some ways antedated by that of the *lira da viola* which he played so often in the core of Leonardo da Vinci as a

in addition to five melody strings that could be stopped against the fingerboard, it also had two open strings which worked rather in the manner of drones. Few instruments have survived, but we know that the *lira* was principally used to accompany improvised song: a strong theoretical and iconographic tradition links it with Orpheus singing, and both its name and

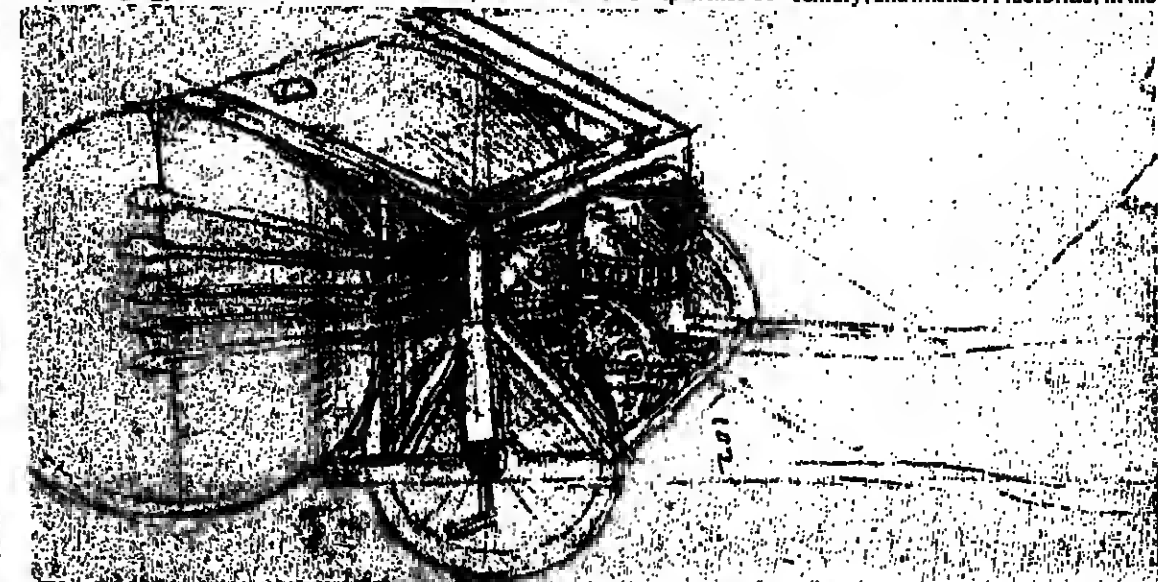
Musica is the first systematic and thorough attempt to study all the relevant notes and sketches against the background not just of contemporary musical instruments but also of Leonardo's other work with mechanisms and natural phenomena. The sketches in particular are often incomplete or ambiguous in their detail, and Winteritz's experience of

such an invention might have been prompted by practical musical experience. The sketches reveal that he finally overcame the mechanical problems, and although there is no evidence to suggest that Leonardo ever built the 'viola organista', others evidently did. Vincenzo Galilei, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, and Michael Praetorius, in the

nineteenth century, and the production of chords. A further group of drawings, already much discussed in the literature, relates to theatrical machines devised by Leonardo for productions at the court of Lodovico il Moro.

Winteritz's closely argued identification of sketches for instruments lies at the heart of his book. Four of the most important chapters are known through earlier published versions and it is useful to have revised texts gathered together with new material. Taken together these sections of the book are a permanent monument in the work of a distinguished historian of musical instrument design. But the attempt to provide context through preliminary essays (on musical environment, traditions and trends, musical friends, exchange of ideas, etc.) is less successful, partly because these chapters are not always so well researched, and partly because the connections with Leonardo are often tangential at best. Thus the instrument-maker Lorenzo Gussasco (best known as Lorenzo da Pavia, Isabella d'Este's Venetian agent in artistic matters) is discussed at length for no better reason than that it is known that the artist stayed with him in 1499. Certainly it is strange to include a detailed account of a spinet now in the Metropolitan Museum as an example of Lorenzo's work (even though it is dated twenty-three years after his death), when an organ with secure attribution is alive and well in the Correr Museum in Venice. Excursions of this sort give Winteritz's book a rather miscellaneous quality - it might have been preferable to present discussion of the sketches in a more straightforward and less encumbered way, as Kenneth Ponting has recently done for Leonardo's drawings of textile machines.

But in any case the context that needs to be emphasized is not so much the historical and social background (where little enough is known) as the relationship of these sketches to Leonardo's other activities. The importance of analogy in Leonardo's thought is evident from almost every page of the notebooks. Recently Martin Kemp has stressed (*Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*, 1981) that those who believe that Leonardo began by studying things as an artist but then became preoccupied with studying



Leonardo da Vinci's design for a mechanized drum activated by crank and for carriage wheels, from the book reviewed here. See also picture on page 96.

(incorrectly) presumed origio in antiquity link both it and its performers considerable status.

With Leonardo's own writings and drawings we are on more secure ground. Remarks about music in the *Treatato* are admittedly a strange mixture of the original, the commonplace, the naive and the contradictory, reflecting perhaps the way in which Francesco Melzi assembled the work from passages in Leonardo's manuscripts and notebooks. But the notebooks themselves are filled with observations about acoustics, some derived from earlier authors but some quite new, as well as ideas for new musical instruments and modifications to existing ones. Emanuel Winteritz, founder and curator since 1942 of the department of musical instruments at the Museo della Scienza e della Tecnologia in Milan, has selected and then pressed against the vibrating mechanism. Given that Leonardo played the *lira da braccio* (often called the 'viola' in the sixteenth century), it is easy to see how

the history of instrument technology pays dividends in the elucidation of passages which, inasmuch as they were noted by earlier commentators at all, were often misrepresented.

Ideas about acoustics and sketches for musical instruments and machines are scattered throughout Leonardo's notebooks, covering their entire chronological range. A major preoccupation seems to have been the invention of the 'viola organista', a stringed instrument with keyboard in which the strings were to be vibrated mechanically, either by a bow moving continuously backwards and forwards, or by a friction wheel. The intention was to devise a keyboard instrument capable of producing string tone (much as the organ produces wind tone), and the main mechanical difficulty lay in how the sounding strings were to be selected and then pressed against the vibrating mechanism. Given that Leonardo played the *lira da braccio* (often called the 'viola' in the sixteenth century), it is easy to see how

early years of the seventeenth, both refer to examples, and in the eighteenth century one was in the Medici collection under the supervision of Cristofori, inventor of the Forte-Piano. In fact, this instrument, which presumably allowed crescendo and diminuendo by finger pressure, may well have influenced Cristofori's own hammer action.

A second major group of sketches concerns the construction of drums and is again mostly taken up with schemes for mechanization. Perhaps not surprisingly in view of Leonardo's interest in war machines and fortifications, these instruments, some of vast proportions designed to be transported and activated by carriage wheels, were (if practically intended at all) more of military than musical use. Other sketches show Leonardo experimenting with the problems of obtaining different notes from a drum while beating it (an effect finally made possible by the invention of the mechanically tuned kettledrum in the

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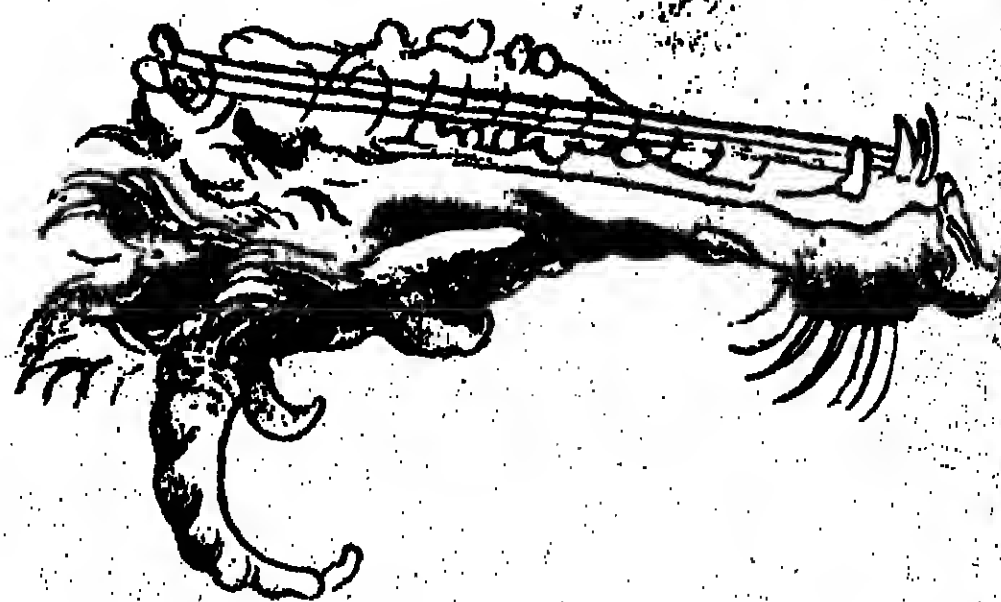
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them for their own sake have missed the point. Increasingly he investigated each thing for the sake of understanding it, the thing itself, and ultimately as part of the process of seeing the universe as a homogeneous organism. Analogies between mechanisms and organisms are characteristic of his mentality, and a neat example with musical implications occurs in some of the drawings of the larynx and trachea in the *Quaderni d'Anatomia* and their accompanying text. Observing the way in which the width and length of organ pipes determined their pitch, Leonardo proposed that changes of pitch in the human voice were caused by the expansion or contraction of the cartilage rings of the trachea. This conclusion is false: the evidence was incomplete because Leonardo had failed to observe the function of the vocal chords in the larynx, probably on account of the technical difficulties of dissecting it. But, as Wintemitz convincingly demonstrates, Leonardo went on to make a further analogy. The larynx itself (which interestingly he called "voce humana") provided him with a model for a new kind of glissando flute (though it is difficult to see how the result, feasible enough in practice, could have had much purpose beyond the momentary amusement of bored courtiers). In this way three of Leonardo's seemingly divergent or at least unrelated interests – physiology, acoustics and the mechanics of musical instruments – are combined and related. Ultimately Leonardo was not so much interested in investigating musical phenomena for their own sakes (or even just for the sake of making analogies with other mechanisms or with nature), as because of an interest in the phenomenon of sound as part of the microcosm, an idea which he himself expressed in parallels between sound waves in air and motion in water. Such analogies confirmed the more general assumption of the harmonious unity of nature. The character of this wider view, the primacy of the final grand analogy, is somewhat lost sight of in Wintemitz's book.

There is another point which is perhaps worth stressing. A single page

in the Arundel manuscript in the British Library contains a series of sketches for what is, in essence, a musical key similar to a modern Swiss music box. Two snatches of musical notation running alongside may be related to this invention; they seem to be a preliminary working-out of the four-voice canon which the mechanism was designed to reproduce. Rather more interestingly, they are the only indication anywhere in the notebooks that Leonardo was musically literate – a fact that is not so obvious as at first it might seem. As a performer on the *lira da braccio*, an instrument principally associated with courtly improvisation, Leonardo would not necessarily have been able to read music. The repertoire – strophic songs performed with variation and embellishment much in the manner of the kind of epic narrative singing described by Montaigne in his *Journals* – was aurally transmitted. And while it is not particularly surprising that Leonardo should have preferred the instrument which, at least in Italian aims, was associated with the ancient lyre and kithara, it is certainly interesting that an artist of Leonardo's formation, a product of the apprenticeship system and a member of the artists' guild in Florence, should have acquired a skill which is usually assumed to have been the prerogative of a courtly elite and some professional performers. It may well be that, for all his remarkable qualities, Leonardo's skills as a practical musician were not all that uncommon in men of his class and training. Dürer could read lute tablature, and according to Vasari both Andrea del Verrocchio (Leonardo's master) and Giorgione were musicians. Later examples of the artist-musician include Cellini and Guido Rinaldi, and among architects (above all Palladio) knowledge of musical theory was a vital ingredient of architectural practice. In broadly analogous ways Leonardo's interests in music should not be viewed in isolation: they not only illuminate questions of education and musical literacy, but are in turn part of a tradition which, since Alberti, had pooled information and ideas in the belief of the value of analogy and the existence of the harmonious unity of things.



Bizarre musical instrument, a drawing by Leonardo.

All in order

Katherine Duncan-Jones

C. A. PATRIDES

Premises and Metaphs in Renaissance Thought and Literature
236pp, Guildford: Princeton University Press. £14.85.
0 691 06505 5

In her poem *No Categories* Stevie Smith wrote:

To God who created me
Not to you Angels who frustrated me
O no me no me, I say,
No hierarchies, I pray.

Oh no categories I pray... In this mood she would scarcely have enjoyed C. A. Patrides' present collection of twelve essays, which take hierarchies and categories as their subject, and are themselves arranged hierarchically. They proceed in gradual descent from "The Orders of the Angels" and "Connections Between Heaven and Earth", by way of such topics as the cessation of the odes, the many-headed multitude and Pope Joan, down to "The Dimensions of Hell" and "The Salvation of Satan". The opening essay, which amusingly expounds the complexities of the "Dionysian" and Gregorian ways of arranging the orders of angels mentioned by Saint Paul, would not only be particularly odious to Stevie Smith, but was condemned by a Soviet newspaper as long ago as 1959 "as a reprehensible capitalist plot to resuscitate obsolete notions". For students of "Renaissance Thought", however, the resuscitation of these notions is extremely illuminating. Where many of the classic studies of the subject – Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being*, Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture*, even to some extent C. S. Lewis's *The Discarded Image* – are apt to imply a solid body of shared belief and assumption, Patrides shows again and again how odd, inconsistent and superficial the acceptance of these "premises" often was. He does full justice to the quirks and idiosyncrasies of such individual writers as Donne, Browne and Milton, avoiding bland assertions about what everyone thought. Milton, for instance, *pace* A. W. Verity, implied a fixed hierarchy of angels, but actually, for poetic purposes, used four, five or nine orders in different passages of *Paradise Lost*, without committing himself either to the "Dionysian" or Gregorian schemes of arrangement. The demands of metre, rather than a commitment to any of the rival schemes, may have determined the disposition of the repeated line:

Thrones, dominations, principities, virtues, powers.

It is a great strength of Patrides that while doing full justice to the learning and subtlety of Renaissance poets, he yet writes about them as literary artists, not mathematicians or theologians.

The most interesting essays in this book are these relating to grotesque or complex topics. There are one or two on comparatively simple concepts, such as the many-headed multitude, where there is not really enough difference of interpretation to make the study rewarding. But the essay on Pope Joan is a tour de force. How many of us knew about the *sedes stercoraria*, or pierced chair, and its possible use for making absolutely certain of the sex of a newly elected Pope? Helpful illustrations are provided. "Approaches to Numerology" are expounded with good sense and authority, and in remarkably few pages, Patrides asserts that numerology is primarily a thematic concern in the Renaissance, rather than a consistently organized structural principle. His arguments are convincing, and reassuring to many of us who have wondered whether even the greatest Renaissance poets could have had the mathematical and architectural skill to make numerological structures as integral to their poetry as some modern commentators would suggest. Among a wealth of learned examples, Patrides quotes an early observer of manipulation of evidence to produce a numerological scheme. One John Chambers in 1601, on the idea of the grand climacteric (see 63) noted:

If any die, not only in that year but any thing near it, as in the 62, 54 years of his life, they will lead into the 63 year and say that they were mistaken.

Such adjustments have almost always been made in the course of the ambitious modern works of numerological exposition.

On the whole Patrides comes to conclusions. His characteristic is to set out the origins of "notions" of these motifs in modern times. His chapter "Heaven and Earth" is a reflection of his flirtation with different minds. Often he touches briefly on the relevance of these motifs in modern times. His chapter "Heaven and Earth" is a reflection of his flirtation with different minds. Often he touches briefly on the relevance of these motifs in modern times. His chapter "Heaven and Earth" is a reflection of his flirtation with different minds. Often he touches briefly on the relevance of these motifs in modern times.

Patrides' essays are a treasure trove of information and insight into the Renaissance mind. They are a must-read for anyone interested in the history of ideas and the history of literature.

The Monuments

Turned on his back, below a gutter-churn,
I found his body lying, drained and grey.
I watched his forward hands. They seemed to turn
As if to push earth off, and swim away.

From whatever threatened him. Strange to lie so,
Lover of digging, and the upheave of earth,
Whose time was spent in tunnelling, even through snow.
Knowing the way to worm the world, from birth.

Heavy to lift, I feel his drooping weight
And realise why a cat would let him lie.
After the claw-stroke, that controlled his fate,
Grey-green, the colour of his killer's eye.

I see the sun glow fur along his length,
And lay him down. I have to bury him.
Who struggled with the ground, with all his strength
And left soil flurried, and was crude and grim.

Under the yews, and marked by leopard's-bane,
Tall-yellow in the light, they rise, his domes,
Magnificent brown monuments, but vain:
Rendered by effort, transitory homes.

Where nothing stays. The same as all of ours,
Doomed to the vanishing of wind and rain.
But still magnificent. O, still huge powers
Against the fall of circumstance and pain.

George MacBride

Terror and rough kindness

Valentine Cunningham

JOCKEY BROOKE

The Image of a Drawn Sword
Ed. by Secker and Warburg. £7.50
paperback, Penguin. £1.95.
0 436 08951 2

First, a summary of the plot – not least because Anthony Powell, to whom the dedication of Jockeys Brooke's *The Image of a Drawn Sword* is dedicated, puts *The Image of a Drawn Sword* through a mere than ordinary flitting mangle in his otherwise helpful introduction to the 1981 edition of Brooke's *The Orchid*. Jockeys Brooke reviewed *The Image of a Drawn Sword* in the TLS when the novel first appeared in 1950. In 1981, the result of the novel was away in every particular. It succeeded in being a haunting fiction into a realistic and dot-sounding business about the Territorial Army. It managed to misremember the novel's ending, and even to get the name of its hero wrong. Since 1981 Powell has been made in the course of the novel doesn't repeat the old story. But still the fans that the reprinted *Orchid Trilogy* doubtless recruited for Brooke's work – I was among them – will have been put off the idea of taking steps to read *The Image of a Drawn Sword* by Powell's well-meant babbling. I was.

What actually happens, or appears to happen, in *The Image of a Drawn Sword* is this. Raymond Langrish, a young bank-clerk, just out of the Territorial Army and not settling into peacetime life in a southern (probably Kentish-derived) rural cottage with his mother, nor much liking the daily dullness of banking, finds himself being lured back in various weird ways to some kind of military activity. An officer, a stranger, but one who seems to have been sent to know all about Raymond – materializes out of a stormy night to urge military re-training on the basis of some (never-specified) war and emergency. Raymond pretends to understand what a fool, let himself be carried along, goes off for runs, ladder linking the two, he is praising Schoenberg's *Jacob's Ladder* on the image. In "The Cessation of Oracles" he takes us up to the house of these motifs in modern times. His chapter "Heaven and Earth" is a reflection of his flirtation with different minds. Often he touches briefly on the relevance of these motifs in modern times.

On the whole Patrides comes to conclusions. His characteristic is to set out the origins of "notions" of these motifs in modern times. His chapter "Heaven and Earth" is a reflection of his flirtation with different minds. Often he touches briefly on the relevance of these motifs in modern times. His chapter "Heaven and Earth" is a reflection of his flirtation with different minds. Often he touches briefly on the relevance of these motifs in modern times.

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the officer's visit. Other trainees cannot recall Reynard even when he prompts them. Reynard is adrift in a world of cryptic messages and elusive significances, desperate to decode the signals with which he's bemuddled, frightened and deterred by titles, personal names, place names that recede, shift and even blank out completely. But in all this frightening phantasmagoria of a plight there are also perverse attractions on offer.

At their first encounter Reynard's eye fondles the officer's face and body with the attention of Gerard Manley Hopkins drooling over the manly perfections of Christ's physique: "Tall, athletically built, he was obviously immensely strong... dormant strength of body... incongruous gentleness. His lips, beneath a small blond moustache, were parted even now in a smile of almost feminine amiability; yet one had the impression that these same lips would not, on other occasions, be wanting in firmness and decision. His hair, still gleaming with raindrops, was noticeable of a light straw colour, and inclined to curl... Among the Other Ranks, with their mysterious tactics and their feral bodies (the "faint, beauly taint of dried sweat, tobacco, stale urine") there's plenty of actual firmness. Reynard relishes the blood and the bruising as military boxing champ Spike Mandeville floors his cellier opponent. Later Mandeville is in the escort party when Reynard is threatened with "the triangle" (whatever that is) and "physical correction... not exceeding two hundred strokes of the cat-o-nine tails". At that announcement Reynard swears away in guilty sexual anticipation: "overcome, simultaneously, by an extraordinary spasm, a kind of orgasm akin to some degrading and involuntary act of sexuality". He is turned on repeatedly, in fact, by the prospect of danger and damage to his body within the ambit of reliable male affections, especially among males of the lower classes. A tramp gives Reynard "rough kindness", offers him "cocca and a kip" ("OK, chum - we'll keep each other warm"), but by morning he's stolen Reynard's wallet: "down had brought corruption, the precocious flower had withered in the bud". The tramp later turns up as a military policeman. On his second escape bid Reynard has to kill him and he does so in a grim parody of a sexual act: "planting his foot firmly on the man's head, thrust the bayonet home into the heaving belly. There was a stifled cry - Reynard thrust it again and again into the yielding flesh."

It's reasonable to conjecture that this giddy mixture of cravings and loathing is a version of Brooke's own mixed feelings about the Army in which, after a blunder at the end of the Second World War and a dissatisfying spell in his family's wine business, he re-enlisted. And nowhere else in Brooke's writing is a vision of the military's arbitrariness and monolithic repressiveness combined so powerfully with glimpses of the bourgeois writer's need – once so common, now looking so dated, so "period" – for the sight and touch of warm proletarian flesh, a yearning that had to endure such extrema and dangerous conditions to find satisfaction.

It also seems fair to guess, with Anthony Powell, that *The Image of a Drawn Sword* is a less mature work than its original publication date would suggest: that it was written before *The Orchid Trilogy* volumes even though it was published afterwards. Apart from memory, his experiences have the character of compelling importance, that lead readers to just the personalized adaptations and hypophantasms that Anthony Powell has given evidence of. Reynard is subject to the sorts of disorientation that years ago Brooke's novel had appeared in the dramas of the Absurd. At the time, the recruiting officer appears not to recognize, or even to know, Reynard; he is, in fact, a stranger. Reynard's mother doesn't remember

more confident and expansive summer glories to come.

In *The Goose Cathedral*, the final part of the trilogy, Brooke's confessional persona admits the imitative badness of his early poems: they were "essays in the 'New Country' manner... The meat I could do was to attempt an occasional poem: full, in nearly every case, of the fashionable images – pylons and kestrels and ruined farms – and of curd menses/lyables like 'death' and 'stripped' and 'hum'." And much *The Image of a Drawn Sword* speaks in the acquired, New Country accent. The loss of Reynard's identity, his identity as he crosses mystifyingly threatening terrains, borders and thresholds of the self, doesn't so much recall Kafka (whom Brooke professed not to have read at the time) as England's ersatz Kafkas of the 1930s, Rex Warner and Edward Upward. When the shot officer gasps his last, he talks pure, boyish Audenese: "Not your fault... tell them the other let... they're advancing... Up by Clamber-crown... their advance HQ is at the old pub... the show on at last." And when Reynard walks out of the novel, he's not only armed (er, armoured) with the jargon of Auden's youthful heroics, he's also been turned into a Paul Morel – the boy who, his mother also just dead, left his novel with just such words as these: "his will unflinching, strong in purpose... He turned, and walked forward with a firm step towards the camp." Clearly it wasn't only the flowers that attracted Brooke to D. H. Lawrence.

Among the more disingenuous disclosures in *The Goose Cathedral* is its dismissal of Thirties "homosexualism": "I didn't really find the cult of homosexualism very sympathetic." No doubt Brooke's youthful socialism was insincere, and it apparently proved easy to discard. But among the most sympathetic aspects of *The Image of a Drawn Sword* is the impression it gives of a text utterly immersed in the dangerous joys and furtive agonies – underground and, in public, underated – of 1930s literary homosexuality. The novel's Glamour smacks of Auden's Dover. Expectations get a rise every time the narrative enters a prosaic, soldierly pub. The temptation facing Reynard to get back among the tough, common, smelly soldier boys reads again and again like something out of T. E. Lawrence. It's as if Brooke had actually read *The Mule*. There are less admirable signs, of course, to this kind of writing. The occasional panting cynicism as Reynard confronts another man can be as dire as E. M. Forster's most coyly closeted short stories. But Brooke's obsession can also be as startling and forceful as the best of this tradition. When Reynard undresses, in preparation, as he believes, for the cat, brutally egged-on and gleefully observed by a couple of NCOs and a private ("lovely, ain't he? Proper 'igh-class bit o' goods, an' no mistake. Look at 'is skin - lovely and smooth, just like a heedin' tart's; pity we're goin' to spoil it for you, ain't it?") the moment is as fearfully attained, and as strong, as anything in, say, James Hanley's *Boy*.

At such moments, of course, one regrets neither the borrowed Thirties touches nor the raw palvity with which they are applied. One only regrets that Brooke should later on have chosen so often to play down the perturbed intensity he desires that even in 1950 could not really speak their name.

Three of H. E. Bates's most popular novels have just been reissued in a handsome edition by Michael Joseph; they are *Poor Old Wind for France* (1939), *The Wind for France* (1940), and *The Wind for France* (1941). The first of these is a story of an RAF bomber crew who find help and succour in the French countryside after crash-landing during a raid; *The Wind for France* is a story of a RAF bomber crew who find help and succour in the French countryside after crash-landing during a raid; *The Wind for France* is a story of a RAF bomber crew who find help and succour in the French countryside after crash-landing during a raid.

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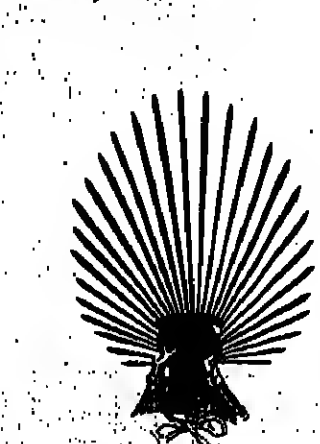
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By divine appointment

D. J. Enright

A. N. WILSON

The Life of John Milton
278pp. Oxford University Press.
£9.95.
0 19 211776 9

"Perfect of the life, or of the work
... In general the lives of writers are
either imperfect in stock respects (ways
of being imperfect, to echo George
Steiner) on modes of
intercourse, are fundamentally finite)
or else rather boring in the narration. I
have never quite understood the
appetite for literary lives, except as a
respectable-sounding substitute for
getting down to the works themselves.

A biography of Milton, no less! The
man can hardly be as diabolical (or as
fascinating) as his Satan; or as lordly as
his Lord God; or as compassionate as
his Christ. Come to that, nor could he
possibly be as innocent as his Adam and
Eve, or as guilty, or as intrinsically
interesting as our grand originals must
necessarily be. Not even if there is
something in him of every one of those
creations.

Literary biographers do well to fall
back on the most important part of
their subjects' lives: the work. A. N.
Wilson's life of Milton strikes one as
having arisen out of the work, and
keeps closely in touch with it, the prose
in particular, throughout. He has no
great revelations to make (thank God,
one is inclined to feel), but he uses the
existing sources deftly and
conscientiously and his interpretation
of events is humane and level-headed.
It is a considerable qualification for the
task that he has a grasp of the finer
points and pointlessnesses of
theological disputation and - more - is
able to see them as the living things

they once were. It is not merely
mischievousness or a pawky wit (both
evinced elsewhere) that prompts him
to observe, in connection with *Of
Reformation Touching Church Dis-
cipline in England*, that "it needs an
act of supreme historical imagination
to be able to recapture an atmosphere
in which Anglican bishops might be
taken seriously; still more, one in
which they might be thought
threatening."

"The Scots, even in the seventeenth
century, were an overeducated race."
Here Wilson pays indirect tribute to
Thomas Young, Milton's early tutor,
who taught his charge Latin and
Greek. The profit of it was, he read
Ovid and Virgil, and then - going on to
St Paul's and Christ's College,
Cambridge - he mastered French,
Italian, Spanish, Hebrew. No doubt
another profit was that the learned how
to curse. Yet surely it was Milton's
intimacy with classical literature that
saved him from degenerating into a
craved polonist. "That what the
greatest and choicest wits of Athens,
Rome, or modern Italy, and those
Hebrews of old did for their country, I,
in my proportion, with this over and
above, of being a Christian, might do
for mine ... Truth that was also
beautiful prevailed over the ugly truths
he felt compelled to spend so much
time and energy and eyesight on
promoting.

While Wilson feels the deepest
respect and admiration for the older
Milton, "God's Englishman", it seems
that he quite does on the young
Milton, the "Lady of Christ's", that
"somewhat exquisite, infinitely
intelligent and very beautiful youth",
further described two pages later as
possessing "rather sophisticated and
lofty manners" and being (alas for his

college tutor) a "lofty and exquisite
pupil". After such encomia it seems
unlikely that Mary Powell, the "pretty
young teenager", will find much mercy
at this biographer's hands.

But "marriages, and what makes
them a success or a failure, are
impermeably difficult things to
interpret". Many readers may not care
a damn about the relationship between
Milton and his first wife. Quite possibly
Wilson doesn't either; but he has to
address himself to the subject. He does
so sparingly and circumspectly, apart
from a touch of romanticism when he
visualizes the deserted husband
sometimes thinking of Mary "with
tender longing; sometimes with hurt
fury", and a tendency to have it or
allow Milton to have it both ways.
Though earlier Wilson has represented
him as a sociable character with "a
taste for extrovert and jolly
companions", he now says that the
poet's "idea of pleasure, since infancy,
had been to sit silently with a book",
whereas Mary "perhaps, had never sat
silent in all her seventeen years". This
picture of Mary, quite sympathetic
though it is, doesn't accord with
Wilson's belief that Sonnet IX was
addressed to her.

Lady that in the prime of earliest youth
Wisely had shunned the broad way and
And with those few amantilly seen
That labour up the hill of heavenly
Truth

With Milton's "sublime egotism" in
mind, we can believe that he must have
resented Mary's prolonged absence
bitterly, whatever the causes. Having
one's wife go home to mother is a
rather ordinary thing to happen, and
the ordinariness of it would not gratify
a man imbued with so strong a sense of
divine appointment.

And so Milton wrote his pamphlets
in advocacy of divorce ("Let not
England forget her precedence of
teaching nations how to live").
"Although he writes from the heart",
Wilson comments, "he is not merely
writing about himself." And when
those pamphlets promptly ran foul of
Parliament's revival of censorship, he
wrote *Areopagitica* - and the same
comment applies. Also, one might
add, having himself run a small school
for some years, he composed a
tract *Of Education*. The end then of
learning is to repair the ruins of our
first parents by regaining to know God
aright - a nice trailer for the
forthcoming epic. He was in the
happy, hazardous position of speaking
simultaneously for himself, for
England, and for God. The thought
occurs that had he not been civilized by
reading in the classics - and possibly by
his irremovable vocation for poetry, in
which sharp words serve instead of
nasty deeds - then he might have
proved, not (as Wilson suggests) "the
most beautiful of capitalism's first-
fruits", but the first frutler of some
totalitarian morass.

Wilson takes issue with Christopher
Hill in his desire to save the rigid
pamphlets from being read "in an
aridly political light" (as which he
imputes to Hill) "the first blast of a
trumpet which we will hear again in the
company of Rousseau, Engels and
Marx" (as *et seq.* True, Milton was
religious, he believed in God and
God's purposes. His over-eagerness in
justifying the ways of men towards
Charles I will seem less distressing if we
remember that he believed the
monarch's execution to be God's
intention. That is, it looks better today,
when belief in divine workings has
diminished to something rare, even rich
and strange. Surely the violence of
the King has to be in a different class
from the secular tyrannies,
commonly to be seen on our television
screens, of Pol Pot, Idi Amin or the
genus *omne*). And yet, restore the
matter to its context, as Wilson urges,
and it will appear hardly more notable
than the justifying of executions on the
grounds that they are incidental to
some ineluctable, "scientific",
historical process. One effort of the
imagination makes Milton look grand;
another makes him look rather
ordinary. Douglas Bush has observed
that "in a sacred cause no holds were
barred" - and all causes are sacred in
some sense. However splendid his
prose style, Milton's polemics

delivered (in that "sneering, lofty,
cross, and satirical voice") exist in a
different world from his poetry: a
world in which (as we say) we have to
live, or someone had to live, but a
world which is lesser because it itself
will die.

Wilson devotes several pages to *De
Doctrina Christiana*, arguing against
the view of that work as heretical while
still bringing out its independence, its
divergences from traditional attitudes.
Its "heresy" lies in "appealing to an
inner principle of certainty", as Basil
Willey has put it. "With a lofty self-
reliance worthy of his own Satan,
Milton frees himself from that last
infirmity of noble Protestants -
subservience to holy writ." Some
awareness of his inorthodoxy in
theology ought to palliate the
puritanicalness of response whereby
Milton is denied the measure of
subtlety freely allowed to novelists,
and so open our eyes to the fine and
proper ambivalence which shows us
Adam acting wrongly in joining with
Eve in disobedience to God but also
acting rightly in his love: "How can I
live without thee?", even though he
would then live for ever. The
theological judgment coexists with the
human verdict. Pelasparianly we must
dissent from Adam's action, but
postlapsarianly (which curiously seems
to require a hardly lesser effort of the
imagination) we sympathize. Perhaps
something similar is implied by
Wilson's apparent self-contradiction,
when he claims that at every stage it
was Milton's own, supremely
independent vision of things which
guided him" and, on the next page,
that *Paradise Lost* was dictated by God
and written in the language of God (an
enhanced form of English, naturally)
but dictated to "a mouthpiece who was
greatly at odds with the words he had to
speak".

Wilson loves Milton's poetry,
though somewhat indiscriminately and
rather nebulously. "L'Allegro", "Il
Penseroso", *Comus*, "At a Solomonic
Music" and "On the Morning of
Christ's Nativity" are "among the most
sublime poetry in the literature of the
world"; "Ad Joannem Rousium" (a
mixture of playfulness and self-esteem
issuing from the loss of his first
collection of poems on route to the
Bodleian) is "one of his finest
occasional poems, undeservedly
neglected because it is written in
Latin"; and "Cyrrack, the three years'
day these eyes" (courageous,
confident, sanctimonious, anything
but delightful) is "one of his most
delightful sonnets". This is endearing -
and there is some biographical point in
adducing "Ad Joannem Rousium" as
testimony to the continuing sense of
poetic vocation - yet what terms will be
left for *Paradise Lost*, but for which
Milton would be a minor English poet,
a lesser Marvell?

The chapter on *Paradise Lost*
consists of thirteen pages, slightly
shorter than that on *Samson Agonistes*;
but then, the latter work is a sort of
"spiritual autobiography", with its
"famous hammer blows", as Empson
has it, "all applying to Milton himself".
Probably this is as it had to be: other
thirteen pages or a whole book? And
Wilson does raise two primo topics. He
concerns with C. S. Lewis as regards the
corporeality of Milton's spiritual
beings, their ability to enjoy eating and
some form of sex - Milton believed
this, he was not just speaking
metaphorically. Indeed, there is little
in the work that is not literal, and what
there is is generally announced in
advance. During the war in heaven

Among recent books on Milton,
*Milton's Good God: A Study in
Literary Theology* by Dennis Richard
Danielson (292pp. Cambridge
University Press, £20.0 521 23744 0)
lays a systematic foundation for
understanding Milton's defence of the
creator's justice; and Thomas N.
Cornes's *The Development of Milton's
Prose Style* (118pp. Oxford University
Press, £12.50. 0 19 811717 9) examines
the word frequencies, lexical and
syntactical features and imagery of
Milton's tracts and pamphlets. Volume
Eight of *The Complete Prose Works of
John Milton* has just appeared (625pp.
Yale University Press, £16.95. 0 300
02561 0); edited by Maurice Kelley, it

some of the contenders get
apart; this might seem to be a
subsequently they fall to the
their wounds, but then, and side the
other considerations, death has to
come into the world. Wilson
Raphael, who tells Adam to
that he must perform like "epic
corporate forms, / As may express the
best" while adding the locative
that earth may be simply the shadow
of heaven and "things therein / Earth
other like, more than on earth
thought". He could also have quoted
from *De Doctrina Christiana* in the
effect that, even though they are
likely to be accurate, we should
conceive of God according to "the
literal and figurative descriptions
which he has seen fit to offer us in his
sacred writings". Milton believed he
was following in God's footsteps in this
matter.

In connection with the "renewal"
theory that Milton was unknowingly
the Devil's party (Dryden had already
commented on Satan's heroic stance,
Wilson rejects - with one hand, at
rate - the argument that, being a
and (though by no means created),
unsuccessful one, the poet instinctively
associated himself with the Fall
Angel. *Paradise Lost* may be, as
Wilson says, the least egotistical of
Milton's works, but - given the system
he stresses throughout - is it not
absurd? In his "courage new
submit or yield" the poet could not
identify to the extent of making Satan
provisionally heroic figure: one that
only with the help of hindsight, was
simultaneously see through. Satan
being a hero at our expense, as
Coleridge observed) a mighty hero
of mankind.

This is all the more feasible in the
every writer wants the en-
adronal-like drive, the invention
and heartfelt reality, that come from
any degree of identification, even
momentary, with the subject in hand.
And of course, commonplace theory
the proposition is, there is no reason
suppose Milton exempt from the
difficulty of making goodness engaging
and the ease of making evil
Macbeth, for whom we likewise
without approving, is notoriously
interesting than Duncan could ever be.

Still, Wilson is right to point to the
evidence in the poem of God
continuing love. And, for we look at
a happy ending or at least a
one, we shall be loath to quarrel with
his conclusion: that *Paradise Lost* is
tempestuous, but ultimately a
testimony to the brightness and
sureness of Milton's own religious
faith". Even so, we may find the
account a little too cosy. Milton was
realist, not apt to be blinded by
brightness of faith or to imagine
with his labours mostly behind him
that a good God in heaven would
the good, easy-going life on earth.
The story recounted here about the
of York's visit, whether literally or
not, is to the point. When the Devil
asked whether he didn't think the
of his sight was a judgment on him for
what he had written against the King,
Milton replied that in that case
Heaven must have been much more
sorely displeased with the Devil's
father: "For I have lost only my eyes,
but he has lost his head". With
lost, we all lose something.

But better blind than brutal. The
a concise, firmly organized history
preferring the factual to the
making good but not slavish use of
subject's own words, and
flavoured with the biographer's
personality.

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in his *Seventeenth-Century
Literature* (295pp. Macmillan,
£2.95 paperback, 0 333 26917 9).
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of Literature* series; this, like the
volumes in the series which
appeared under the
Editorship of A. Norman,
gives sketchy histories of the
and its background, and is
with photographs.

The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy

By Geoffrey Hill

Nous sommes les derniers. Presque les après-derniers. Aussitôt après
nous commence un autre âge, un tout autre monde, le monde de ceux
qui ne croient plus à rien, qui s'en font gloire et orgueil.

Charles Péguy

1

Crack of a starting-pistol. Jean Jaurès
dies in a wine-puddle. Who or what stares
through the café-window creped in powder-smoke?
The hill for the new farce reads *Sleepers Awake*.

History commands the stage wielding a toy gun,
rehearsing another scene. It has ragged so before,
countless times; and will do, countless times more,
in the gulch of supreme clown, dire tragedian.

In Brutus' name martyr and mountebank
ghost Caesar's ghost, his wounds of elf and ink
palimpsest spouting. Jaurès' hood lies stiff
on menu-card, shirt-front and handkerchief.

Did Péguy kill Jaurès? Did he incite
the assassin? Must men stand by what they write
as by their camp-heds or their weaponry
or shell-shocked comrades while they sag and cry?

Would Péguy answer - stubbornly oo guard
among the *Cahiers*, with his army cape
and steely pince-nez and his hermit's heard,
broodlog on conscience and embattled hope?

Truth's pedagogue, braving an entrenched class
of fools and accondrels, children of the world,
his eyes caged and hostility behind glass -
all Péguy said that Hope is a little child.

Violent contrariety of men and days; calm
jeddery homberdment of a silent film -
showing such things: its canvas slashed with rain
and St Elmo's fire. Victory of the machine!

The brick celluloid clatters through the gate;
the corbice of the century dances in the street;
and over and over the Jolly cartoon
armies of France go reeling towards Verdun.

2

Rage and regret are tireless to explain
stratagems of the out-mansauvred mao,
the charge and counter-charge. You know the drill,
raw veteran, poet with the head of a bull.

Footslogger of genius, skirmisher with grace
and ill-luck, sentinel of the sacrifice,
without vantage of vanity, though mortal-proud,
defied your first position to the last word.

The sun-tanned earth is your centurion
and you its tribune. On the herd-won
high places the old soldiers of old France
crowd like good children wrapped in obedience

and sleep, and ready to be taken homo.
Whatever that vision, it is not a child's;
it is what a child's vision can become.
Memory, Imagination, harvesters of those fields

our gifts are apolls; our virtues epitaphs,
our substance is the grass upon the grave.
"Du calme, mon vieux, du calme." How studiously
one cultivates the sugars of decay.

pâtisserie-tinklings of angels "sieur-dame",
the smile of the dead novice in its plush frame,
while greed and disaffection are ingrained
like chalk-dust in the ranklings of the mind.

"Rather the Marno than the *Cahiers*." True enough,
you took yourself off. Dying, your whole life
fell into place. "Sieurs-dames, this is the wall
where he leaned and rested; this is the well

from which he drank." Péguy, you mock us now.
History takes the measure of your brow
in blank-eyed bronze; bravo-modicore work
of *Nidawate*, sculpture, cornered in the park

among the stout dogs and Ismo patriots
and all those ghosts, far-gazing in mid-stride,
rising from where they fell, still on parade,
covered in glory and the blood of bestraggs.

3

Vistas of richness and reward. The cedar
uprears its lawns of black cirrus. You have found
hundred-fold return though in the land
of exile. You are Joseph the Provider;

and in the fable this is your proper home;
three sides of a courtyard where the bees thrum
in the crimped hedges and the pigeons flirt
and paddle, and sunlight pierces the heart-

shaped shutter-patterns in the afternoon,
shadows of fleurs-de-lis on the stone floors.
Here life is labour and pastime and orison
like something from a simple book of hours;

and immortality, your measured task,
blooms on the antique scars of the new desk
among your relics, bits of ivory quartz
and dented snuffbox won at Austerlitz.

The proofs pile up; the dead are made alive
to their posthumous fame. Here is the archive
of your stewardship; here is your true domaine,
its fields of discourse ripening to the Marno.

Château de Trle is yours, Chartres is yours,
and the carved knight of Gisors with the hound;
Colombey-les-deux-Eglises; St Cyr's
cadres and echelons are yours to command.

Yours is their dream of France, militant-pastoral:
musked red gillyvors, the wicker bark
of oleastic braided across old brick
and the slow chain that cranks into the well

morning and evening. It is Domrémy
restored; the mystic strategy of Foch
and Bergson with its time-scent, dour panache
deserving of martyrdom. It is an army

of poets, converts, vine-dressers, men skilled
in wood or metal, peasants from the Bouce,
torse teachers of Latin and those uncoloured
in all but the hard rudiments of grace.

Such dreams portend, the dreamer prophesies,
is this not true? Truly, if you are wise,
deny such wisdom; bid the grim home-fortune
defend your door: "M'sieur is not at home."

This world is different, belongs to them -
the lords of limit and of postumely.
It matters little whether you go tamely
or whether you go with a will to your doom.

This is your enemies' country which they took
in the small hours an age before you woke,
went to the window; saw the mist-hewn
statues of the *l'éco* king emerge at dawn.

Outflanked again, too bad! You still have pride,
luggard obliquities: those that take remorse
and the contempt of others for a muse,
bound to the alexandrine as to the Code

Napoleon. Thus the bereaved soul returns
upon itself; grows resolute at chess,
in war-games hurling dle of immense loss
into the breach; thus punitively mourns.

This is no old Bouce manoir that you keep
but the rue de St-Bonome, the cramped shop,
its uncoloured *Cahiers* built like barricades,
its three disciples, disciples and fouds,

the camelot-cry of "stick! At Thérèse says,
"all through your life the sound of broken glass."
So much for Jaurès murdered in cold piguet
by some vexed shadow of the *l'éco* époque.

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some guignol strutting at the window-frame.
But what of you, Péguy, who came to 'exult',
to be called 'wolfish' by your friends? The guilt
belongs to time; and you must leave on time.

Jaurès was killed blindly, yet with reason:
'let us have drums to beat down his great voice.'
So you spoke to the blood. So, you have risen
above all that and fallen flat on your face

5

among the beetroots, where we are constrained
to leave you sleeping and to step aside
from the fleshed bayonets, the fusillade
of red-rimmed smoke like stubble being burned;

to turn away and contemplate the working
of the radical soul – instinct, intelligence,
memory, call it what you will – waking
into the foreboding of its inheritance,

its landscape and inner domain; images
of earth and grace. Across Artois the robe-mages
march on Bethlahem; sun-showers fall
slantwise over the kalefield, the canal.

Hedgers and ditchers, quarrymen, thick-shod
curés de campagne, each with his load,
shake off those cares and burdens; they become,
in a bleak visionary instant, seraphim

looking towards Chartres, the spiked sheaves,
stone-thronged annunciations, winged ogives
uplifted and uplifting from the winter-gleamed
furrows of that cross-trodden ground.

Or say it is Pentecost: the hawthorn-tree,
set with coagulate magnified flowers of may,
blooms in a haze of light; old chalk-pits brim
with seminal verdure from the roots of time.

Landscape is like revelation; it is both
singular crystal and the remotest things.
Cloud-shadows of seasons revisit the earth,
odourless myrrh borne by the wandering kings.

Happy are they who, under the gaze of God,
die for the 'terre charnelle', marry her blood
to theirs, and, in strange Christian hope, go down
into the darkness of resurrection,

into sap, ragwort, melancholy thistle,
slimy meadowswort, the fruited-brook
rising and running through small wilds of oak,
past the elder-tump that is the child's castle.

Inevitable high summer, richly scarred
with furze and grief; winds drumming the flame
of the tin legions lost in haystack and stream!
Here this lost are bleat, the scarred most sacred:

odd village workshops grimed and peppercoated
in a dust of dead spiders, paper-crowned
sunflowers with the bleached heads of rag dolls,
brushes in aspic, clay pots, twisted nails;

the clinking snail and clear sheepbell-sound,
at noon and evening, of the angelus;
colfed girls like geese, labourers cap in hand,
and walled gardens expellered with angels;

solitary bookish ecstasies, proud tears,
proud tears, for the forlorn hope, the guerdon
of Sedan, 'oh les braves gens!', English Gordon
stepping down sedately into the spears.

Patience hardens to a pittance, courage
unflinchingly declines into sour rage,
the cobweb-banners, the shrill bugle-bands
and the bronze warriors resting on their wounds.

These fatal decencies, they make us lords
over ourselves: familial debts and dreams,
keepers of old scores, the kloddy ones
telling their heady sous, the child-eyed crones

who guard the votive candles and the faint
invalid's night-light of the sacrament,
a host of lilies and the table laid
for early mass from which you stood aside

to find salvation, your ovens cleaving
brusquely against the grain of its own myth,
its truth and justice, to a kind of truth,
a justice hard to justify. 'Hav'ing

spoken his mind he'd a mind to be silent.'
But who would credit that, that one talent
dug from the claggy Beauce and returned to it
with love, honour, suchlike bitter fruit?

6

To dispense, with justice; or, to dispense
with justice. Thus the catholic god of France,
with honours all even, honours all, even
the damned in the brazen Invidious of Heaven.

Here there should be a saction without words
for military head alone: 'Sombre et Meuse',
the 'Sidi Braham' or 'Le Roi s'Amuse';
white gloves and monocles and polished swords

and Dreyfus with his buttons off, chalk-faced
but standing to attention, the school prig
caught in some act and properly disgraced.
A puff of satrap prances on one leg

to snap the traitor's sword, his ordered rage
hurting with 'cran et gloire' and gout of rouge.
The chargers click and shiver. There is no stir
in the drawn ranks, among the hosts of the air,

all dropped and gathered by the weird storm-light
cheap wood-engravings cast on those who fought
at Mars-la-Tour, Sedan; or on the meo
in the world-famous stories of Jules Verne

or nailed at Golgotha. Drumrap and fife
hit the right note: 'A mort le Juif! Le Juif
à la lanterne!' Serenely the mob howls,
its silent mouthings hammered into scrolls

torn from *Apocalypse*. No wonder why
we fall to violence out of apathy,
redeemed by falling and restored to grace
beyond the dreams of mystic averice.

But who are 'we', since history is law,
clad in our skins of silver, steel and hide,
or in our rage, with rotten teeth askew,
heroes or knaves as Clio shall decide?

'We' are crucified Pilate, Caiaphas
in his thin soutane and Judas with the face
of a man who has drunk wormwood. We come
back empty-handed from Jerusalem

counting our blessings, honestly admire
the wrath of the peacemakers, for example
Christ driving the money-changers from the temple,
applaud the Roman steadiness under fire.

We are the occasional just men who sit
in geunt self-judgment on their self-defeat,
the élite hermits, secret orators
of an old faith devoted to new wars.

We are 'embusqués', having no wounds to show
save from the thorns, ecstatic at such pain.
Once more the truth advances; and again
the metaphors of blood begin to flow.

7

Salute us all, Christus with your iron
garlands of poppies and ripe carrion.
No, sleep where you stand; let some hoy-officer
take up your vigil with your dungfork spear.

What vigil is this, then, among the polled
willows, cart-shafts uplited against skies,
translucent rain at jutting calvaries;
on paths that are rutted and broken-walled?

What is this relic fumbled with such care
by mittened fingers in dugout or bomb-
tattered, jangling estaminet's upper room?
The incense from a treasured tabatière,

you wutehmen at the Paslon. Péguy said
'why do I write of war? Simply because
I have not been there. In time I shall cease
to invoke it.' We still dutifully read

'beureux ceux qui sont morts.' Drawn on the past
these presences endure; they have not ceased
to act, suffer, crouching into the hall
like labourers of their own memoria!

or those who worship at its marble rote,
their many names one name, the common 'dur'
built into duration, the endurance of war:
blind Vigil herself, helpless and obdurate.

And yet what sights! Saul groping in the dust
for his broken glasses, or the men far-gone
on the road to Ennias who saw the ghost.
Commit all this to memory. The line

filters, reforms, vanishes into the smoke
of its own unknowing; mother, dad,
gone in that shell-hurst, with the other dead,
'pour la patrie', according to the book.

8

Deer lords of life, stump-toothed, with regged breath,
throng after throng cast out upon the earth,
flesh into dust, who slowly come to use
dreams of oblivion in lieu of paradise,

push on, push on – through struggle, exhaustion,
indignities of all kinds, the implous Christian
oratory, 'vos morituri', through berserk fear,
laughing, howling, 'servitude et grandeur'

in other words, in nameless gobbets thrown
up by the blast, names issuing from mouths
of the dying, with their dying breaths.
But rest assured, bristly-brave gentlemen

of Normandle and Lore. Death does you proud,
every heroic commonplace, 'Amor',
'Fidelitas', polished like old armour,
stamped forever into the featureless mud.

Pollus and sous-officiers who plod
to your lives' end, name your own recompense,
expecting nothing but the grace of France,
drawn to her arms, her august plenitude.

The bleze of death goes out, the mind leaps
for its salvation, is at once extinct;
its last thoughts tetter the furrows, distinct
in dawn twilight, caught on the barbed loops.

Whatever strikes and maims us it is not
fate, to our knowledge. En avant, Péguy!
The irony of advancement. Say 'we
possess nothing; try to hold on to that.'

9

There is an ancient landscape of green branches –
true tempérant de droite, you have your wish –
crossbatching twigs and light, goldfinches
among the peppery lilac, the small fish

pencilled into the stream. Ah, such a land
the lio de France once was. Vitreol and horn
wind through the meadows, the dawn-masses sound
fresh triumphs for our Saviour crowned with scorn.

Good governors and captains, by your leave,
you also were sore-wounded but those wars
are ended. Iron men who bell the hours,
marshals of porte-cochère and carriage-drive,

this is indeed perfection, this is the heart
of the mystère. Yet one would not suppose
Péguy's 'doct', 'offiliation', your lost cause.
Old Bourbons vlew-hallooing for regret

among the cobwebs and the ghostly wine,
you dream of warrior-poets and the Meuse
flowing so sweetly; the androgynous Muse
your priest-confessor, sister-châtelaine.

How the mood swells to greet the gathering storm!
The chestnut trees begin to thresh and cast
huge canisters of blossom at each gust.
Coup de tonnerre! Bismarck is in the room!

Bad memories, seigneurs? Such wraiths appear
on summer evenings when the gnat-swarm spins
a dying moment on the tremulous eir.
The curtains billow and the rein begins

NOTES

2.1. poet with the head of a bull./Poetry, a tapestry by Jean Lurcat,
depicts the twelve signs of the zodiac and a poet with the head of a
bull.

2.7. Rather the Marne than the Cahiers/adapted a phrase from a review-
article by P. McCarthy, TLS, June 16, 1978, p. 675.

4.1. the lords of limit/The phrase is Auden's, from an early poem
'Now from my window all I watch the night'. See *The English
Auden*, edited by Edward Mendelson (London, 1977), pp. 115-16.

4.6. the camelot-cry of 'stictal'/'Les camelots du roi' was a right-wing,
anti-Dreyfusard organization, prominent in the street-battles of the
period.

4.6. As Tharaud says, 'Danjel Halévy, Péguy and Les Cahiers de la
Quinzaine', translated from the French by Ruth Bickell (London,
1946), p.171: 'Always, all through his life, this sound of broken glass, to
use Tharaud's expression.'

its night-long vigil. Sombre heartwoods gleam,
the clocks replenish the small hours' advance
and not a soul has faltered from its tence.
'Je est un autre', that fatal telegram,

floats past you in the darkness, unrecieved.
Connoisseurs of obligation, history
stands, a blank instant, awaiting your reply:
'If we but move a finger France is saved!'

10

Down in the river-garden a grey-gold
dawnlight begins to silhouette the ash.
A rooster wells remotely over the marsh
like Mr Punch mimicking a lost child.

At Villeroy the copybook lines of men
rise up and are erased. Péguy's cropped skull
dribbles its ichor, its poor thimbleful,
a simple lesion of the complex brain.

Woelessly battered but not too bloody,
smeared by fraternal root-crops and at one
with the friillery and the veined stone,
having composed his great work, his small body,

for the last rites of truth, whatever they are,
or the Last Judgment which is much the same,
or Marcy, even, with her tears and fire,
he commends us to nothing, leaves a name

for the burial-detail to gather up
with rank and number, personal effects,
the next-of-kin and a few other facts,
his arm over his face as though in sleep

or to wend off the sun: the body's prayer,
the tribute of his true passion, for Chartres
steadfastly cleaving to the Beauce, for her,
the Virgin of innumerable charities.

'Encore plus douloureux et doux.' Note how
sweetness devours sorrow, renders it again,
turns to affliction each more carnal pain.
Whatever is fulfilled is now the law

where law is grace, that grace won by inches,
inched years. The men of sorrows do their stint,
whose golgothas are the moon's fringes,
the sun's bear flare over the salient.

J'accuse! J'accuse! – making the silver prance
and curvet, and the dust-motes jig to war
across the shaky vistas of old France,
the gilt-edged maps of Strasbourg and the Saar.

Low tragedy, high farce, fight for command,
march, counter-march, and come to the salute
at every hole-and-corner burial-rite
bellowed with boarse dignity into the wind.

Take that for your example! But still mourn,
being so moved: éloges and elegy
so moving on the scene as if to cry
'in memory of those things these words were born.'

The landscape of unease

Holly Eley

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

People Who Knock on the Door
306pp. Heinemann. £7.95.
0 435 33521 5

This mordant indictment of contemporary middle America has much more in common with Patricia Highsmith's *Edith's Diary* than with her Ripley books. Edith's engagement with the moral dilemmas presented by the Vietnam war served to provide a focus for her life and inject hope into the monotony of suburban existence; but in *People Who Knock on the Door* the Alderman family of Chalmers (Indiana) in the 1980s has nothing to struggle against or on which to pin its faith. This is until insurance salesman Richard Alderman joins a born-again Christian sect, replaces Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie with Creationist "literature" such as *The Plain Truth* and *The Waylifter*, and seeks to impose his new beliefs on his wife and two sons.

The issue which divides the Alderman family, and exposes the fragility of Chalmers' materialistic society as well as the hypocrisy of fundamentalist dogma, is that of the taking of life. With her usual skill

Highsmith produces an apparently clinical, though in fact richly imagined, study of human frailty. The story is mainly that of fifteen-year-old Robbie, who is persuaded by his father to unite with him in condemning his elder brother's girlfriend's abortion. Soon after, he is obliged to contend with the birth of his father's illegitimate child—the child's mother being a truck-stop waitress and ex-whore who depends on Richard for spiritual counsel.

Most of Highsmith's familiar obsessions and devices are present here. Robbie, when not bible-punching or hanging out with a group of aimless, elderly, poor-white fishermen, drowns worms for recreation. Straightforward, studious Arthur, banished from home after the abortion, is forced to put himself through university on a series of part-time jobs while attempting to turn a love affair into a steady relationship. At the same time he is trying to contravert the blinkered intensity of his father's religion with a balanced philosophy of his own; hours are spent in the municipal library reading Jacques Monod. His thoughts (described in detail and at length) are liberal and serious but, like Highsmith's creepier characters, he, not above indulging his imagination when an occasion presents itself—as he repairs a washing line, the end of a metal clothespole reminds him of "a

girl's sexual organs, the hole in the centre, the four supports played out like limbs . . ."

The protagonists are male—not obviously as Highsmith is on record as saying about her male characters) because the plot necessitates their greater physical strength—and they are often, as in the case of the seemingly stable Arthur, extremely dependent on women. Women are sketched in but not elaborated. Among the bored and affluent who have always peopled Highsmith's novels there are (as is customary) those who stand out due to their eccentric choice of job or hobby—an octogenarian grandmother who directs a jazz dance school in Kansas City, for example. Flat, plain prose combines with closely observed detail to create an atmosphere of cumulative menace and insecurity.

By the time Robbie shoots and kills his father one sultry afternoon in the study we know how his reform school psychological case history will read. It is equally clear that little has changed in Highsmith's suburbia since Van Allen (in *Deep Water*, 1958), having found the gap between reality and his hopes impossible to bridge, drowned his wife's lover in the backyard swimming pool. Highsmith's perspective on this particular landscape has always been a moral one: the absence of a church among the swimming pools is keenly felt. Given her earlier books it is not surprising that the eventual provision of one, far from stimulating moral regeneration, is in itself the immediate source of greater unease, then disaster, and (among the few members of the community able, through books or through travel, sufficiently to distance themselves from Chalmers) a scared feeling of *plus ça change*.

In the end, unlike the Ripley novels, or the collections of stories, this book is not so much concerned with the delineation of guilt or with the complicated feelings induced when we suddenly realize that our sympathies lie with a psychopath—as with the exploration of a foreign place, one which we might have imagined to be prosperous and predictable, easy to pass through and forget. Instead, it turns out to be frighteningly complex and interesting—a well worth understanding. If only to avoid reproducing it elsewhere.

What distinguishes this ostensibly conventional rich man's saga is Nova's adventurous and inventive fictional scheme. *The Good Son* is a serial novel: a patchwork whose autonomous squares of narrative are provided in the first person by eight different characters. The narrators are the three Mackinnons, of course, and Chip's two suitors—but also more peripheral characters, such as Wade Cannon (the local family chauffeur) and Mr Moore (the local deer poacher). The most compelling section is presented by Jean Cooper's older, plainer sister and is a clinically brutal sketch of a small-town America sourd by communal jealousy. But the novel is more than an accumulation of separate episodes; its elements are profoundly integrated, and recurring themes and motifs finally make coherent its enigmatic, intricate but elusive design. One is not to discount Mrs Mackinnon's nature notes merely as decorative interludes; nor are they metaphors. There is a correspondence between the habits of birds and bears and turkeys and the events at the Mackinnon farm. But they are a commentary on the vanities of ownership. The Mackinnons can never "possess" the Delaware woods. All they can do is hold the title deeds and regulate the hunting. It is wildlife (including those humans who remain turbulent, instinctive and unbridled) which will inherit the earth.

Nova's major weakness—and one which disfigures the speech of all eight narrators—is his fondness for complex sentences. Regularly over ninety words long, these are cluttered with inappropriate conjunctions and overburdened with parentheses. His speciality is the Siamese sentence, unutterably joined at the colon and crying out for an editor's scalpel. Here is Pop describing his son:

Chip has blue eyes and a good, strong nose. (the way mine looked before the sauce did something to it), clear skin (tanned now, too, because of the time he had spent in the sun: it just made his eyes seem bluer and his teeth whiter), although some of his hair fell out in prison camp.

It is a measure of Craig Nova's considerable imaginative flair that *The Good Son* remains consistently engaging despite the inadequacies of its prose.

Ambiguous gifts

Alan Brownjohn

STANLEY MIDDLETON

Entry Into Jerusalem
184pp. Hutchinson. £7.50.
0 91509 50 5

The opening paragraph of *Entry Into Jerusalem* is a description of a very English landscape of trees, grasses and rain-showers, and it reads like a characteristically quiet entry into a new Stanley Middleton novel. This is a small, and apposite, authorial trick. We are really looking at a watercolour over which the painter, John Worth, is shaking his head in stubborn uncertainty. Very little that friends can do with words to help Worth—teasing, cajolery or reassurance—has any value to him. He will go his own way to success or failure, not out of egotism, or austere integrity, but in a kind of detached bewilderment with his talent which cannot be dispersed by praise, money or love. This sort of artistic temperament is not rare, but it is rare to find it in a novel, and *Entry Into Jerusalem* is an absorbing if sometimes difficult exploration of the theme of—if you like—"Why connect?"

Connections of several kinds are offered to Worth. A thirty-two-year-old ex-art teacher who was overruled by his pupils, he is befriended by a former colleague who admires his paintings and tries hard to say so. This Turnbull is one of Middleton's most poignant and fascinating inventions: fifty-ish, a rugby star who now lives with his ascetic, very young wife Millicent, striving to transmit genuine truths to pupils and colleagues through words and diligent example, and getting it all wrong, breaking down, killing himself. He cannot assist the cool and ordered painter, and Worth is of no service at all to him: real connection cannot be made here, any more than it can with Ursula, Worth's left-wing girlfriend, who is terse and bullying about the content of his paintings, and yet condescends for him as a human being, eager to promote his career in a selfless way.

There are tempting commercial connections available: a London gallery offers Worth wall-space for a large mural in an Arab's mansion in St gives a straightforward, if somewhat simplistic, résumé of the last hundred years of women's struggle for emancipation while selling a rather good tale. It is an excellent book for one who has over-reacted to her criticism, or who is never just the kind of book, in the Aunt Sarah or Jackle world of *Entry Into Jerusalem*, which is a life of drudgery: working in the pie shop and breeding. She produces six children before taking Sarah's advice about the sponge-and-vinegar treatment.

Her sixth child is a girl—Ruby, who discovers the typewriter, an emblem of liberation in the early twentieth century. Aunt Sarah, meanwhile, becomes a suffragette, is sent to Holloway prison at the age of seventy, goes on hunger strikes, is rescued by her family and winds up dead on the Titanic en route for a lecture tour in the United States. Cowled by the destruction wrought during the First World War, Ruby sacrifices her blossoming radicalism to marry Walter Orange, whose company sends him to India. A somewhat reluctant membership, Ruby begets Randolph, and Emma who dies prematurely, stepping on a beach mine when the family is back in England in the Second World War. As the novel picks up speed to race us through the 1950s and 60s, hope for the future lies with Jackle, Randolph's daughter, who is, as it were, a contemporary of Zoë Fairbairns. She does all the liberated 1970s things, from free love (though all about Ruby reminds us that she knew about that with her pre-marriage pot friend Robin) to an American college campus to single parenthood in a Scottish commune.

Stand We At Last travels a long way in time and space, and covers a lot of ideological ground in the process. It inevitably damages her sex life), Pearl rejects the worthy suitors presented by her father and runs off with Hamish Barrington, a pianist. While Aunt Sarah is impressed by this seemingly radical move and Hamish is a kind man with big hands—capable of both strength and delicacy—Pearl faces a life of drudgery: working in the pie shop and breeding. She produces six children before taking Sarah's advice about the sponge-and-vinegar treatment.

Back to England, Sarah lives on, doing rescue work for prostitutes, but feminist hopes invested (misguidedly) in Jonathan's illegitimate child, Pearl (Lezzy, her mother, told her she was found in an oyster shell). After an early brush with prostitution (which

John's Wood, what he eventually plans, after much hesitation and some abrupt treatment of the party's intermediary, and with missing the Ursula, seems bizarrely inappropriate the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem of a motor-bike, with cropped hair, leather jacket, boots. Worth seems on failure; and yet he makes connections through the act of painting and a mysterious process of working his way through to his own island where he is breaking through, there comes a fortuitous-seeming encounter from a business patron and he assumes his mistress, who had been sold widely, written about. At the end of the book he is a confirmed success with the *Entry* a famous, controversial religious painting, and connections arriving from everywhere.

But success on the world's stage (and one notices in the last chapter that Worth is now finding it difficult to capture in painting the "essential essence" of things even if he is present the vigour, or melodrama) is an ambiguous gift. Middleton presents a cryptic parallel between Worth's commencement on the new life of a large painting and Millicent Turnbull's redecoration of her husband's cluttered study. Fame and money, the new point of the study with, we come, may be an indirectly rewarded, yet something valuable in old way is going to be destroyed. In essence of Middleton's novel, the source of that curious, unworldly strength which grips unexpectedly as the mundane detail seems to be accumulating a little too calmly, is that there is no winning, no long, only living itself. In *Entry Into Jerusalem*, once again it is the subtle, tiny moments when character is thrown into relief by the need to get through some occasion of sorrow, embarrassment or self-doubt, that tell us the story. The difficulty, that Ursula sees Worth has over-reacted to her criticism, or who is never just the kind of book, in the Aunt Sarah or Jackle world of *Entry Into Jerusalem*, which is a life of drudgery: working in the pie shop and breeding. She produces six children before taking Sarah's advice about the sponge-and-vinegar treatment.

There are tempting commercial connections available: a London gallery offers Worth wall-space for a large mural in an Arab's mansion in St gives a straightforward, if somewhat simplistic, résumé of the last hundred years of women's struggle for emancipation while selling a rather good tale. It is an excellent book for one who has over-reacted to her criticism, or who is never just the kind of book, in the Aunt Sarah or Jackle world of *Entry Into Jerusalem*, which is a life of drudgery: working in the pie shop and breeding. She produces six children before taking Sarah's advice about the sponge-and-vinegar treatment.

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The history of the whole contention

Stanley Wells

SHAKESPEARE

King Henry VI, Parts One, Two and Three, and King Richard III
BBC2

Shakespeare's three long plays on the reign of King Henry VI, with their dramatic sequel *Richard III*, all written only in his career, form a more or less continuous structure than had been attempted by an English playwright ever again to work on such a scale. Admittedly, the plays do not add up to an artistic unity of the order of, say, Wagner's *Ring*. The first play, *Henry VI*, does not look forward to the last, *Richard III*, in the way that *Richard III* looks back to its predecessors. Individual works in the series employ somewhat different theatrical conventions; their verbal styles vary, a development in poetic mastery is evident from one to another. *Richard III* is a more confidently rounded whole than the three earlier plays.

Nevertheless, their narrative links are stronger than those within any other group of Shakespeare's plays: they are far more uniform in style than in later composed sequence, also of *Henry VI*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*—dramatising the immediately preceding period of English history; and *Richard III*, in particular, gains greatly in resonance when experienced in conjunction with its predecessors. The enormous success of Colley Cibber's adaptation, for two centuries perhaps the most popular play on the English stage, bears witness to this; for the background of Shakespeare's play, acted alone, lacks. The theatre's abandonment, during the late nineteenth century, of his adaptation, lamentably though it consens some aspects of its original, has not given to the undisciplined text a comparable pre-eminence; and the most successful version to be performed during the twentieth century, with Laurence Olivier at its centre, adopted some of Cibber's structural changes and even retained a few of his verbal additions.

This ought to have made evident that, if we are to experience *Richard III* in its proper context, we need to see it in its proper context. Whether the playgoers of Shakespeare's own time had the opportunity to do so we cannot tell. There is no evidence that the plays were performed consecutively. When they were performed, it is highly unlikely that the first three were given under the identical labels bestowed upon them, as all probability, by the compilers of the First Folio and remorselessly repeated by later editors. The second and third instalments first appeared in *The First Part of the Contention Between the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* . . . and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York, and the Death of Good King Henry the Sixth, with the Whole Contention Between the Two Houses Lancaster and York*—two asappier than the titles by which they are now known, but undeniably more informative. But not so them on consecutive afternoons, they may have done so with shorter gaps than those experienced by most modern playgoers.

Since Shakespeare's time, so far as I know, the English theatre has never presented these four plays as a sequence except in hastily prepared performances by Frank Benson, at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1906. The first three have rarely been given at all. Douglas Seale directed them, considerably shortened, at Birmingham in 1953, and also in London. In 1964, the Royal Shakespeare Company presented *The Wars of the Roses*, an adaptation by John Rogers, directed by him with Peter Hall, condensing the four plays into three and including some 1,400 lines of Cibber's own composition.

There are no surprises: we know what must support Sarah's "determination" that a woman was the equal of a man in any circumstances, against the (and, sadly, often female) delusion of the kind of woman who would be measuring for curtains and so forth but we know that for a long time

It was almost Cibber Redivivus. It was marvellous theatre; it restored some area of Shakespeare's text of *Richard III* to unaccustomed life; but it gave us Shakespeare adapted, rather as if Liza had transcribed the *Ring* in the way that the transcribed Beethoven's symphonies or Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy. It didn't give us the chance to assess the plays as they were written; not to put too fine a point upon it, we weren't sure—and, in the darkness of the theatre, we couldn't easily check—

Elizabethan theatre-in-the-round". In the first play, particularly, we are very conscious of the conventionalized setting, and it becomes a way of helping us to accept the play's artificiality of language and action. In the Countess of Auvergne episode, for instance, Talbot has only to blow his horn for his army to materialize in the Countess's chamber. To play this naturalistically would make it seem absurd; to accept its unreality allows us to concentrate undistractedly on the

whether we were listening to Shakespeare or Barton. In 1977 Tarry Hands directed the first three parts in much purer texts (omitting about 750 lines), also at Stratford-upon-Avon, but denied us the consummation of *Richard III*.

It all goes to show that we should be better watching television; because in 1961 Peter Dews directed for the BBC a version of the sequence as part of the serial *An Age of Kings*, and now, under the auspices of the BBC Television Shakespeare, here are all four plays presented, Sunday by Sunday, in texts that are probably purer than any given in the theatre since Shakespeare's time and (to judge by the first and second parts of *The Contention*) possibly even then. I doubt if more than 500 lines are cut out of about 12,500; and there are only minor adjustments in what remains.

This demonstrates courageous faith on the part of the director, Jane Howell, in both the plays and her audience. Some measure of adaptation for the television screen would seem to be entirely reasonable; indeed, capacious persons might even argue that the decision not to adapt represents a failure in responsibility to the medium. But Jane Howell has accepted the challenge of making the plays work in very much the terms in which they were originally composed, and has displayed great cunning in effecting the translocation from the wooden O to the celluloid rectangle.

In some respects she embraces the plays' theatricality. Her basic set (designed by Oliver Boydell) is constant throughout. Most of the earlier plays in this series have been quasi-naturalistic in their settings; a few have been filmed on location. But Jane Howell has dared to encourage us to remember that the action is taking place in a studio—or, more precisely, in a warehouse which was converted into a studio for the six months during which a single company of actors rehearsed and filmed the sequence. The wooden structure of palisades, steps, platforms, alcoves, walkways, gates, and swing doors on, around, and within which the actors work has been described as "a medieval, almost a playground", and the director, in a radio broadcast, remarked that it accidentally resembled "an

action's significance. As the sequence progresses, however, a sense of reality increases, until in *Richard III* many of the scenes seem to take place in virtually real interiors.

Acceptance of unreality is apparent, too, in the fact that about thirty actors share roughly 200 speaking parts among them; nor is any great effort made to alter their appearance from one role to another. Casting has been careful and intelligent, with an eye both to making the characters' appearance conform to what is said about them and to clarifying the actions. There is no escaping the fact that even those who know their Shakespeare well may have problems in keeping track of who is who in these plays in which Shakespeare's powers of characterization are relatively undeveloped. Jane Howell does what she can to help by providing a wide range of physical types and, more questionably, by endowing them with a variety of regional accents. All members of the cast speak with skill and understanding; some of them handle verse mellifluously in voices whose beauty is unimpaired by regional characteristics. The director is remarkably successful in encouraging her performers to invest with personal significance, sometimes self-generated, some of the more generalised, sentimentalised—the death scene of Warwick (played by Mark Wing-Davey) is a notable example. But most local accents inevitably create something of a plebeian impression which may seem at odds with the dignity and status of the aristocratic and royal protagonists.

The commitment of a relatively small number of actors to these plays over a long period of time has resulted in a unity of approach that has been sadly lacking in some other components of the series. The unfamiliarity of the plays is perhaps a help. Responses are fresh; there is no sense of famous actors dropping in between engagements to repeat other contexts, nor need to scale down affects that were originally conceived for the stage. The company has raw weak links, and almost all the actors find the right scale of projection. Soliloquies and asides are frequently and effectively spoken directly to

camera: rhetoric is given with inward force rather than with theatrical expansiveness. Playing is unselfish, but inevitably some roles stand out. Peter Benson opens the first play, singing beautifully in an episode of mourning for Henry V, and later takes on the role of Henry VI, onerously thin, whey-faced, innocent-eyed, puffin-nosed, befringed. He succeeds in making Henry both pathetically ineffectual and truly saintly. It is in

the first play, particularly, we are very conscious of the conventionalized setting, and it becomes a way of helping us to accept the play's artificiality of language and action. In the Countess of Auvergne episode, for instance, Talbot has only to blow his horn for his army to materialize in the Countess's chamber. To play this naturalistically would make it seem absurd; to accept its unreality allows us to concentrate undistractedly on the

—Cengus MacNammra's fiery Young Clifford and a Zolt Warramker's Lady Anne. But their success derives, in part at least, from the sustained power and imagination of Jane Howell's direction.

This is not to say that the productions are uniformly compelling from beginning to end. The performance of Joan to Pucelle is misconceived. Occasionally there is an excessive discrepancy between action and setting. The director has not found a satisfying visual correlative for the stylization of language and action in the episode at the Battle of Towton when Henry meditates on the cries of kingship and the horrors of war as he sees and hears a son who has inadvertently killed his father and a father who has similarly killed his son. This is particularly regrettable because here Shakespeare's thematic concerns are most readily apparent. He is to revert to this image of the tragic desolation caused by civil war in the closing speech of *Richard III*:

England hath long been mad and scarred herself—
The brother blindly shed the brother's blood,
The father rashly slaughtered his own son,
The son, compelled, been butcher to the sire.

As a inter poet was to put it, "the subject is war, and the pity of war: the poetry is in the pity." Elsewhere the director serves the playwright well. There are many ingenious transitions, as in Part One when one scene ends with Talbot's soldiers, grouped in a pyramid, pledging him with the cry "A Talbot!" and the same image recurs to show that we are back with this episode a few scenes later. The director and her right arranger (Malcolm Runeson) handle many of the numerous fights and battles brilliantly, sometimes with slow motion to convey the pressure of time, sometimes with a economical, but thrilling images of rowdy drummers, pikemen and archers in action, and climactically in Part Three with a haunting, eerily beautiful fight in a snowstorm (textually justified by lines from *Richard III*, in which Edward tells how he and his brother "lay in the field, / Frozen almost to death"). In the "frenzied night"

The conventions of the plays are fully respected. There is, for example, no violation of *Richard III*'s general practice of reporting rather than representing violence. The weaker patches are neither omitted nor dashed through, but are played for what they are worth. The method is uniformly honest, and sometimes it succeeds triumphantly, above all in the Cade episodes of Part Two. Here, the death of the Clerk who perishes at the hands of the mob because he can write his name has the symbolic significance of the death of Cinna the poet in *Julius Caesar*, and the subsequent scenes, reaching a climax in the burning of "all the records of the realm", with Cade's exultant grimaces superimposed upon shots of slaughter, torture, and the pages of books torn up, cast into the air, and floating down on to a bonfire that sometimes an impetus and vitality that they might belong to a modern play conceived entirely in television terms.

This is real translation of Shakespeare into the medium of television. Other stretches of the plays are more pedestrian, but the dedication, with which, almost throughout the fourteen hours of playing time, Jane Howell has served Shakespeare is so admirable that she can be forgiven the indulgence of ending "the tetralogy" following *Richard III* with a peace after the stopping of "evil wounds" with a sequence in which we see a pile of bloodstained corpses, their cackling laughter, and finally see Margaret, on top of the pyramid, exultantly cradling in her arms the corpse of *Richard III*. It is a melodramatically simplistic conclusion to a richly varied experience; and it is not Jane Howell's fault if, in the last analysis, we wish that Shakespeare had been a few years further into his career when he embarked upon this epic enterprise.

It seems ungracious not to praise many other individual performances, among them Trevor Peacock's noble Talbot and egotistically absurd but horrifying Jack Cade. Frank Middlemass's Beaufort, gleefully in death, Paul Chapman's glamorous Suffolk, and—among the smaller parts



Henry VI and the Knights of the Garter, from the copy of Lydgate's *Life of St Edmund* made for the King to commemorate his visit to Bury St Edmunds at Christmas 1433; an illustration from English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages, edited by V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (220pp. Duckworth, £18. 07156 16374).

UPPER 1.50

to the editor

National Character

Sir, - I thoroughly enjoyed Theodore Zeldin's review of Robert Blake's *The English World* (December 31, 1982) but hope he is not serious about the futility and end of national character studies. (One of the problems provincial Americans like me have in reading the 775 is that unique English sense of humour cited by Zeldin. We can never be sure when one of your reviewers is being serious or just "having us on").

First, a small objection to Zeldin's apparent misunderstanding and rejection of the much-abused "national average". Recall the anarchist labour agitator, in Manchester I think it was, who at a rally vowed in "strike, and strike, and strike until even the lowest paid workers make more than the national average". If the national average is fairly constructed from well-sifted and clearly presented data, Zeldin's objection loses much of its sting. Anyone working with means (averages) must remember the first purpose of a mean: A mean is meant to present a true picture of the population being measured and described. It is the duty of the "national-average historian" not just to present the mean, but to choose and explain why which average best represents the population. And, of course, while he's at it, please tell us the median, standard deviation, in fact, if it is important, please give us the whole histogram if the editor will permit.

Let me try to illustrate the point of the last paragraph. Zeldin objects to building theories about national mentalities from statistics telling us that on the average absenteeism is higher in Britain than in France. He objects because there are parts of France where absenteeism is just as high as it is in Britain. Of course, there may be regions or industries in France where the conditions of work or traditions of the workforce may lead to a higher absenteeism than the national average in Britain, just as absenteeism in Dagenham may be much higher than

the high British national average. But this is interesting and should challenge the national-average historian to probe beneath the surface and ask why. The good national-average historian will tell us a great deal about regional disparities and variation within, because in some areas that very variation may in fact be the most important feature of the national average. (W. L. Morton, the Canadian historian, is good at this when he explains the difference between Canada and the United States in *The Canadian Identity*.)

Just where would we be without national character to fall back on in our description and interpretation of the past and preparation for the future? How dull and lifeless would John Keegan's *Six Armies in Normandy* be without the informal exchange between Ike and the Pennsylvania coal miner Screaming Eagle, the displaced, moled and polyglot, but tough and loyal, Canadians, the staunch and hubristically accentuated Highland Scots, steady and sturdy English yeomen, and glibly romantic Poles. When I sit down to negotiate a contract or agreement with a Japanese (team) I think I can anticipate that the negotiation process will be very different from a negotiation with a Saudi or Nigerian. If, in a management development programme, I face a group of executives, half from Italy and half from Sweden, I think I can reasonably expect that the discussion of a case study will be dominated by one of the two national groups.

Is Zeldin really saying that historians will soon have nothing better to offer me to prepare for my Japanese negotiation than a collection of 120 million individual biographies? If historians abandon the search for national character, where will we turn? To economists? To political scientists? To national stereotype jokes? If historians abandon the search, something will step forward to fill the void, but I hate to think what. Flawed as their approach might be, would rather turn to historians here for help, because I think that their approach is closer to the ideal than any obvious alternative.

J. FREDERICK TRUITT,
School of Business Administration,
University of Washington, Seattle,
Washington 98195.

Buer

Sir, - "Buer" (Letters, January 21) is neither rare nor obsolete in this East Midlands town. I frequently hear it in my factory job, indeed it was used in conversation this morning in describing the occupant of an exotic sports-car. The context is usually one of sexual attractiveness, whether required or otherwise.

"The buer's male counterpart is the 'chevvie' or 'chevy'."

A. R. BREEZE
The Mill, Shelton, Newark,
Nottinghamshire.

Kicks

Sir, - May I assure Eric Korn (Reminders, January 21) that "kicks" was slang for shoes among the more up-to-date in the hills in south-eastern Ohio in the 1930s? It was usually in an approving sense, as "That's a nice pair of new kicks."

ROBERT FRAZER,
Department of History, University
of Nottingham, University Park,
Nottingham.

'Fire in America'

Sir, - A factual error in Mark Abley's review of Stephen J. Pyne's *Fire in America* (November 5, 1982) deserves correction. If only to let American readers have a decent night's sleep. The rate of death from fire in the United States is not 400 times greater than in Britain - the factor is more like two or three. About 8,000 people die each year in the United States, compared with about 800 in Britain, which of course has only a quarter of the population.

CHRISTOPHER HALL,
Department of Building, University
of Manchester Institute of Science and
Technology, Manchester.

William Blake

Sir, - D. J. Enright, in his review (January 14) of my edition of William Blake's *Selected Poems*, questions my interpretation of "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires." I take this to mean that it is better to murder the infant desire, if it cannot properly be acted, than to nurse it, shocking the orthodox by a "hellish" proverb and by his metaphor keeping an escape route open to an acceptable meaning. The "is" (rather than "this") supports this reading, which is not demolished by "He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence", provided the possibility of eliminating desires which should not be acted is acknowledged, as it must be by anyone who believes in the annihilation of the selfhood.

Possibly relevant to this second proverb is Blake's statement to Lavater: "All Art is a Virtue. To hinder another is not an act. Murder is Hindering Another. Theft is Hindering Another. Backbiting, Undermining, Circumventing, and whatever is Negative is Vice." Using this special meaning of "act" the whose non-performance breeds pestilence are only positive acts which do not hinder others. Blake plays dangerous games with words, but his distinctions between what in normal parlance are good and evil acts, and as much as a moralist as any of us, though he won't admit it.

P. H. BUTTER,
Department of English Literature,
The University, Glasgow.

Yvor Winters

Sir, - By way of reviewing W. W. Ransom's *The Definition of Literature* (January 21), Iain McGilchrist has produced a caricature of Yvor Winters that will not stand comparison with that critic's work. It may be argued that Winters' intense preoccupation with the short poem in the Renaissance limited his response to (say) the dramatic monologue and the Romantic period. But it is equally arguable that the sensibilities of the Romantics to certain academic techniques has done much to valorize their writings. One cannot be called eccentric for finding a dichotomy between Blake's language and what can be surmised of his beliefs - a dichotomy that, as Winters said, renders the early poems intermittently obscure and the prophetic books preponderantly so. Further, Winters' reading of Yeats, largely adverse though it is, may yet be found more

LOUIS ALLEN's books include *Sitting, 1974*, and *The End of the War in Asia*, 1976.

WILL ALSOP is a practising architect, a partner in Alsop, Barnett and Lyall, and author of the Riverside Studios development scheme.

MARK AMORY is the editor of *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, 1980.

ALAN BROWNHOOD was recently elected Chairman of the Poetry Society's General Council. His most recent collection of poems, *A Night in the Gazebo*, was published in 1981.

T. A. J. BURNETT is the author of *The Rise and Fall of a Regency Dandy: The Life and Times of Scrope Berdmore Davies*, 1981.

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IAN FENLIN's *Muscle and Paranoia in Sixteenth-Century Mania*, Vol. 2, will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

MIRIAM FOOT is Assistant Keeper in the Department of Printed Books at the British Library.

FRANÇOIS KERSAUVY is the author of *Churchill and de Gaulle*, 1981.

KENNETH KITCHEN is Reader in Egyptology and Coptic at the University of Liverpool.

PETER LINGHAM is a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

DAVID MITCHELL's books include *The Jesus: A History*, 1980.

IAN NISH is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics.

stimulating than that of the accepted Yeatsians. I recommend to Mr McGilchrist Winters' account of the dome imagery in "Byzantium" and his explanation of the mysterious "ceremony of innocence" in "The Second Coming".

Further than this: McGilchrist is unwise to mock Winters in his positive discriminations without having first traversed the ground. His he, for example, read Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, poem by poem and line by line? If not, he is in a poor position to dispute Winters' judgment of "The Cricket" as a great work in its own right and an unexpected foreshadowing of the French symbolists.

The fact is that, as the late F. R. Leavis once remarked to me, every critic has his own myths. The Universal Reader is a myth. Critics may help us to investigate received values or to engage with fresh texts. But it is as pointless to caricature the preferences of Winters as to upbraid Matthew Arnold for ignoring George Eliot and Dickens in the great age of the novel.

PHILIP HOBBSBAUM,
Department of English Literature,
The University, Glasgow.

Mourning in Papua

Sir, - If the statements contained within the parentheses under the title of Laurence Lerner's poem, "Acts of Mourning in Papua" (December 3), represent the fantasies necessary for Lerner to contextualize his poem for the reader, then one must note sadly that the poet's imagination is extremely limited when he conjectures how other people might use language.

PHILIP HOBBSBAUM,
Department of English Literature,
The University, Glasgow.

Catullus

Sir, - In his review of J. R. Adams's *The Latin Served Vocabulary* (December 17, 1982) P. H. Howell quotes the author as giving with relevance to Catullus 3, "Catullus had caught a youth masturbating". Howell seems to have taken this as read; however, on turning up James Michie's translation of the passage I find he renders *deprensit modum pupulum pulchrum* as "I caught a tender little lover, / But not up, rogering his bird." My own poor Latinity is a thing of the past, but it seems there is a girl somewhere in the case. Misreading, and the "element of punishment" which appears to be a misreading. *Abbi Ope*, in fact.

FREDDY HURDIS-JONES,
35 Square Marguerite, 190
Brussels.

Among this week's contributors

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Neither in diversity nor in structure nor in the sensitive and sophisticated use of tropes such as metaphor and metonymy, can the language spoken by Papuans be termed "poor". Surely a poet as esteemed as W. Lerner does not want to return to, even inadvertently, to a nineteenth-century notion of the impoverished "primitive".

ANNETTE B. WEINER,
Department of Anthropology,
New York University, New York,
NY 10003.

'Language of the Underworld'

Sir, - Anthony Burgess, reviewing David W. Maurer's *Language of the Underworld* (January 22, 1981), remarks that Maurer offers an explanation of the origin of the term "turguesque" as used to indicate a posture willing to perform anal intercourse.

Undoubtedly, the word is a corruption of "Turkwise", Turks being everywhere known for their sex performance. This has been verified, or at least confirmed, by no less an authority than Big Liz Findall of Kansas City, a very outstanding professional in a city celebrated for its soiled doves, as well as by Mr. Wiggles, retired now to Fort Lauderdale, who claims to have heard both terms more often than "a goose has gone barefoot".

TIMOTHY CRAIG,
95 Middlenock Road, Sands Point,
NY 11050.

Catullus

Sir, - In his review of J. R. Adams's *The Latin Served Vocabulary* (December 17, 1982) P. H. Howell quotes the author as giving with relevance to Catullus 3, "Catullus had caught a youth masturbating". Howell seems to have taken this as read; however, on turning up James Michie's translation of the passage I find he renders *deprensit modum pupulum pulchrum* as "I caught a tender little lover, / But not up, rogering his bird." My own poor Latinity is a thing of the past, but it seems there is a girl somewhere in the case. Misreading, and the "element of punishment" which appears to be a misreading. *Abbi Ope*, in fact.

FREDDY HURDIS-JONES,
35 Square Marguerite, 190
Brussels.

Expressions of the economic

Michael Rosen

WALTER BENJAMIN
Das Passagen-Werk: Gesammelte Schriften, Volume V
Edited by Rolf Tiedemann
Two Vols. 1345pp with sixteen
illustrations. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
358 51222 5

TERRY EAGLETON
*Walter Benjamin or Towards a
Revolutionary Criticism*
Wigan. New Left Books. £8
paperback, £3.25.
0 8091 036 9

RICHARD WOLIN
*Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of
Redemption*
316pp. Columbia University Press.
1982.
0 231 05422 X

In 1931, three years after the publication of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, the obscure masterpiece which he had intended as his habilitation thesis, Walter Benjamin wrote to Max Horkheimer:

"... what I did not know at the time of its composition became more and more clear to me soon after: that, from my very particular position on the philosophy of language there exists a connection - however strained and problematic - to the viewpoint of dialectical materialism."

More than fifty years later the location of that connection - whether, indeed, it can be said to exist at all - remains in dispute. Nor is this in the least surprising. To put Benjamin's early writings, with their predilection for mythical theories of language and, unobscuredly, anti-scientific metaphysics, together with the ideas of Marx and Engels, can only, it seems, undermine the latter: the connection is plausible, surely, only if Marxism is a scientific pretensions notwithstanding.

Not the least complexity (and not the least interest) in the question of Benjamin's relation to Marxism is that it is as much the question of what is Marxism - a scientific materialism, a quasi-Hegelian eschatology, or what? Nor is it only Marxism's inner tensions (equivocations, to be blunt) which have made Benjamin's relationship to it so controversial. The intellectual issues are themselves almost inextricably entangled with his personal and political circumstances.

Successful only to abolishing any alternative prospects, Benjamin was never in a position to pursue the life of independent scholarship for which alone he saw himself as suited. Family conflicts, money troubles and political upheavals repeatedly disrupted his plans, so that an image of him has grown up as a kind of exotic butterfly, helplessly caught in the gates of Europe between the wars.

Benjamin was, indeed, helpless in many ways (incapable, apparently, of making even a cup of coffee for himself), but, at least where his work was concerned, he was self-assured, even calculating. Nor was he ever the withdrawn, other-worldly figure he might inspire, given his absorption in the forgotten by-ways of intellectual history. From his school days he showed a strong commitment to radical political activity. No doubt his love-affair with the Soviet Communist, Asja Lasker, brought him to think more seriously about Marxism than before, but even that forceful personality could not have manipulated Benjamin's work in a direction he did not want to take.

His financial difficulties forced him to leave aside cherished projects in order to try and support himself by his pen, and, confusingly, as one now knows to reconstruct his ideas, they led him to try and present his more serious work in whatever light would, he felt, appeal most to potential sponsors. (To this he proved naïve; however, very few such hopes bore fruit. Throughout the 1920s and 30s Benjamin's finances were between the precarious and the desperate.)

Working on his own left him heavily dependent on three friends, major

figures in their own right, for intellectual companionship: Gershom Scholem, Bertolt Brecht and Theodor Adorno, and the relations to his friends add further complications to the question of Benjamin's relationship to Marxism. Inevitably, it has been their perspectives - above all, those of Scholem and Adorno, devoted guardians of the literary legacy, and tireless promoters of Benjamin's reputation - which have dominated interpretation. Yet, genuine and close as his relationship was with all three, it did not prevent Benjamin from preserving a certain intellectual distance, and, even, at times, playing one off against the other. What is more, all three had, as Benjamin well knew, reservations about his Marxism (reservations which, of course, could only have increased his natural cynicism).

Brecht and Scholem, opposed to each other in every other way, were equally dismissive of Benjamin as a Marxist. Scholem spoke of his "Janus face"; he was, Scholem says, caught in theoretical vacillations: "torn between his sympathy for a mystical theory of language and the necessity, felt equally strongly, to combat it from within the framework of a Marxist world-view". Brecht was even more blunt. He comments on Benjamin's "Marxist" essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility": "All mysticism, from an attitude against mysticism. This is how the materialist view of history is adapted! It is quite dreadful."

When Brecht and Scholem merely reject the idea of Benjamin as a Marxist, Adorno's attitude is less simple. It is true that Adorno did not take Benjamin's early ideas to be inherently incompatible with Marxism; to the contrary, he made the idea of their reconciliation his own. Yet he was by no means convinced by Benjamin's own attempts to bridge the two together. In a series of letters written in the 1930s - responses, for the most part, to work Benjamin had submitted to the journal of the Institute for Social Research - Adorno expressed the fear that Benjamin, under the influence of Brecht, was sacrificing the dialectical subtlety of his work to a simplistic "vulgar-Marxism". Against this, Adorno saw his own task as being "to hold your arm steady until Brecht's swoosh sunk more into its exotic waters". His aim was to reinforce the theological element in Benjamin's writing; only then, he believed, would Benjamin's aesthetic theory develop to full force: "A restoration of theology, or, better yet, a radicalization of the dialectic into the glowing centre of 'theology' would, at the same time, 'have' to mean the utmost intensification of the social-dialectical, indeed economic, theme."

Adorno placed his chief hopes on the *Passagen-Werk* (the name comes from the Paris arcades) which Benjamin worked on for the last thirteen years of his life, and whose fragments have now, finally, been published. Taking as its starting-point the "latent mythology" of Parisian urban architecture, the *Passagen-Werk* was to "provide" nothing less than a "fundamental history" (*Urgeschichte*) of nineteenth-century culture. But what has come down to us is no more than a sketch-pad for the final work: a set of observations, quotations and reader's notes, collected thematically by Benjamin. There are sections on architecture and urban geography, but its representative figures, the *flâneur* and the *dandy*, on major writers (Fourier, Victor Hugo and - above all - Baudelaire); as well as broad philosophical reflections. We lack, however, anything to show how these elements would have been woven into the form of the final work. So, as things stand, Rolf Tiedemann's point in his editor's introduction is very true. It is by reference to the *Passagen-Werk* available writings that the *Passagen-Werk* can be understood; whether the final version would have developed so as to vindicate what Adorno once called Benjamin's *Passagen-ethnologie* we cannot now tell.

Adorno's passionate engagement with Benjamin's work was later to be the source of much bitterness. As the German New Left rediscovered Benjamin in the 1960s, suspicions were raised that Adorno had used Benjamin's financial dependence on the Institute for Social Research, and his subsequent control of his unpublished writings, to promote the image of Benjamin's work most congenial to his own ideas. Exaggerated though such accusations were, there can be no doubt that Adorno's relations with Benjamin had a complexity of master to disciple. To write, as Adorno did to Benjamin, as "the advocate of your own intentions" cannot have made relations easy.

Not the least of the thanks due to the devoted editors of the *Gesammelte Schriften* is for having brought the availability of Benjamin's work to the point where such personal questions should properly sink from sight. Such is the wealth of material now provided that the real issue - the nature of Benjamin's master thought - can be addressed to the proper source, the texts themselves.

Most important of the continuities between Benjamin's early and mature thought is his allegiance to a distinctive form of Kantian philosophy. He announces this first in an early essay (written as a twentieth birthday present for Scholem), "On the Programme of the Philosophy to Come". Here Benjamin argues that Kant's philosophy is to be accepted, he thinks, is the fundamental turn given to philosophy by Kant (what Kant himself calls his "Copernican revolution") - a turn away from purporting to investigate the nature of reality directly, towards an investigation of our experience of that reality. Yet, fundamentally though Benjamin considers Kant's turn to the question of experience, he is critical of what he takes to be the restricted concept of experience - as if to experience were simply to catalogue sense-images under general rules - which Kant himself presupposes. This critical encounter with Kant leads to what Benjamin proclaims as contemporary philosophy's prime task: "to undertake the foundation of a higher concept of experience, under the auspices of Kantian thought."

Scholem, in his touching and revealing memoir of Benjamin (translated as *Walter Benjamin: The Story of Friendship and reviewed below*) recalls a conversation from that time in which Benjamin explains his point more vividly:

He spoke of the breadth of the concept of experience which this meant, and which, according to him, included the mental and psychological links between man and the world in areas not yet reached by knowledge. When I made the point that, in that case, the mental side would be a legitimate inclusion - in this conception of experience, he replied with an extreme formulation: A philosophy which does not include and cannot explain the possibility of a 'divination' - that is, a 'vision' - cannot be true.

Thus, even at his most apparently mystical and anti-scientific, Benjamin's chief concern is Kantian; that is to say, he wants to articulate the distinctiveness of certain kinds of experience - the allegorical world of the *Truismel*, or the struggle against myth in Greek tragedy - which a scientifically-oriented culture dismisses or takes to be insignificant. But this does not mean that their claims must be treated as valid; the experiences are important in their own right, not as alternatives to scientific knowledge.

This emphasis on the concept of experience is the key to Benjamin's relation to Marxism, for it is the means by which he answers a crucial question - one which confronts not just Marxism but the whole tradition of cultural history. It is the question of what connects different areas of a culture, economy and ideology. The expressive relationship obtains, because it has allowed us to see a common identity in its diversity. In the German tradition it has led, as Sir Ernst Gombrich has

put it, to "Hegelianism without Hegel" - attempts to preserve the Hegelian idea of cultural unity emanating from a single centre, without recourse to Hegelian metaphysics. In the context of Marxism the problem takes the specific form of the relation between "base" and "superstructure": the nature of the connection between the economic life of men as producers of material goods and the ideological realm in which, according to Marx, economic life is reflected and transfigured.

In a highly significant fragment of the *Passagen-Werk* Benjamin offers his own answer to this problem of the ideological superstructure:

At first sight it seems as though Marx only wanted to establish a causal connection between superstructure and base. But his remark that the ideologies of the superstructure mirror relationships in a false and distorted manner goes beyond this. The question is, in fact: if, in a certain sense, the base determines the thought- and experience-content of the superstructure, yet this determination is not a simple mirroring, how (leaving aside the question of its causal origin) is it to be characterized? As its expression. The economic conditions under which society exists come to expression in the superstructure.

Benjamin's task was to account for the existence of such an "expressive" relationship in the framework of his conception of experience. How he does so emerges most perspicuously in a short piece, "On the Mimetic Faculty", written in 1933. Here, once again, he pursues his challenge to the flattened, Enlightenment conception of experience. Even in the modern world, he claims (and Freud is as important a witness to this as Marx), human beings show a capacity to structure their experience according to what he calls, in German, "mimetic resemblances" - resemblances, that is, in which similarity is not just a matter of mapping or visible correspondence, and which may seem bizarre or even occult when measured against a worldview for which that is the only kind of experience conceivable.

Scholem (for whose reaction to the piece Benjamin waited with particular eagerness) sees it as another instance of the Janus-face - a return (welcome to his way of thinking) to the mystical stance of the early writings; it lacked, he said, "even the slightest hint of" materialist view of the world. Certainly, the essay is quite at odds with modern scientific reductionism. But there is another sense in which the intentions behind "On the Mimetic Faculty" might reasonably be described as materialist: what the essay attempts to do is to undermine a perspective from which certain phenomena must either be dismissed, or, if they are acknowledged, treated as occult or transcendent. Nowhere does Benjamin come closer to the ideas of Wittgenstein than here: only because the "enlightened scientific" conception is taken as a given are certain experiences made to seem inexplicable and mysterious, just because they go beyond the presupposed scientific perspective.

A very interesting letter to Adorno's wife, Gretel, Benjamin draws a parallel between this essay and an essay of Freud's on telepathy (the essay now forms the second of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*). No doubt what impressed Benjamin is that Freud, like himself, takes seriously a phenomenon often dismissed by science as "occult", but, rather, as a type of perception, operating at a level not normally appreciated or acknowledged.

Mimetic experience is what allows us to identify "correspondences" between different areas of social life (similarly, he writes in the *Passagen-Werk*), and makes plausible the idea of an expressive relationship between economy and ideology. The expressive relationship obtains, because it has allowed us to see a common identity in its diversity. In the German tradition it has led, as Sir Ernst Gombrich has

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of it) at the deepest, collective levels of their experience. Correspondingly, the task of the *Passagen-Werk* is to reassemble that experience from its sedimentations and incrustations. Phenomena which seem the most dissonant and obscure – the interior exteriors of the *passages* themselves, the passion for roulette, the vogue for panoramas – may turn out to be the most revelatory. As, according to Nervalis, with poetry, so also with Benjamin's *Urgeschichte*: the more personal, local, peculiar, temporal a phenomenon, the closer it may stand to the centre.

Needless to say, this approach places an enormous weight on the concept of experience. There is, inevitably, a certain circularity. The "unseen affinities", referring, as they do, to a subterranean level of awareness, are not such as strike the observer immediately and unambiguously. Yet it is in their existence which provides Benjamin's concept of experience with its only possible justification. Proof, thus, necessarily makes reference to the reader's own intuition, and

Benjamin acknowledges this in language sinking reminiscent of Wittgenstein: "Method of this work: literary montage. I have nothing to say only to show." Yet there is always the worry that what are shown are no more than provoked associations, and that the conviction that they carry comes, ultimately, from their suggestibility (and political commitment) of the reader. The correspondences must be objective if Benjamin's insights are to be said to be part of a genuine contribution to Marxism. But, in the nature of the case, the claim to objectivity must always be precarious.

To see what happens when Marxists abandon this concern for objectivity one need only look at Terry Eagleton's *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*. A few sentences on Defoe suffice: "It is not surprising, then, that what strikes us most about the 'pulp' fiction of Defoe is precisely the weightlessness of its signifiers, which efface themselves in a potentially infinite metonymic chain to yield up all the material immediacy of their

signifieds. Yet this instantly involves us in a contradiction at the very heart of the puritan ideology. For if the 'innocence' of Defoe's dematerialized writing marks the presence of a privileged autobiographical subject, a lonely Cartesian ego radically anterior to its material embodiments, the same device so foregrounds the material world itself as to threaten constantly to reduce the subject to no more than a reflex or support of it. The subject's epistemological security of position is in contradiction with its 'real' precariousness and contingency.

And so on. The mannerisms of style (the spurious "precision", sneer-quotes for "real") make the book's intellectual provenance immediately apparent. One doubts whether there is any other tradition in which assertions so sweeping could be advanced in the complete absence of explanation, evidence, or supporting argument. In what sense is Defoe's writing "dematerialized"? Does that really mean the same as to say that its

"signifiers" are "weightless"? What makes Defoe's signifiers – more than those of any other writer – members of a "potentially infinite metonymic chain"? And, if they are members of such a chain, how does this make the signifiers "yield up . . . the material immediacy of their signifieds"? Indeed, how, while one is about it, could "signifieds" – which are concepts, if anything – be "materially immediate"? What is to show that all of this goes to "mark" the presence of a Cartesian – rather, say, than a Berkeleyan or Kantian – subject?

Yet such questions, which arise almost limitlessly on every page of Eagleton's book, are in a sense beside the point. What has happened is that once respectable (if complex) concepts have been stripped of all analytical purchase, swept away into a turbid torrent of pseudo-philosophical cliché. The result is not theory but theoreticalism: a "boo-hurrah" vocabulary for talking about literature more obscure, but just as subjective, as anything in the "bourgeois" literary criticism it affects to oppose.

Benjamin's work may be difficult and, for the Anglo-Saxon reader, alien, but, fortunately, however, it has nothing in common with such slap-dash

Of much more value (though, no doubt, less marketable to students of literature with inferiorly complex concepts about philosophy) is Richard Wolin's *Walter Benjamin, an Aesthetic of Redemption*. Simply, clearly and conscientiously, Wolin guides the reader through Benjamin's life and work. What marks the exposition is an admirable sensitivity in its choice of emphasis (Wolin realizes that it is not always the most celebrated pieces which are most revealing for the development of Benjamin's thought) and an awareness of intellectual affinities not always spotted (for example, to Hamann in the philosophy of language, and to Sorrell in political theory). It is, in that sense, a deep immersion in the complex German text, Wolin has emerged writing lively, unpedantic prose. The newcomer to Benjamin's work is here in excellent hands.

ART

Emblems of consciousness

Flint Schler

ARTHUR C. DANTO

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art
212pp. Harvard University Press.
£12.25
0 674 90345 5

In this highly amusing philosophical treatise, Arthur Danto sets out to circumnavigate and define the art-world by reconstruing those objects which loiter on the verges of art – Duchamp's wretched urinal, Oldenburg's monumental lipstick and other marvels of that ilk – Danto aims to delineate the "boundary of ultimate concern" between art-works and things which are merely real.

Danto's flirtation with the marginal and the eccentric is bound to seem perverse – and I think it is meant to. Once upon a time, aesthetics sought to define art by dwelling on its central instances and asked itself the question: What is it about these instances that manifests the value of art? "Art" was then understood to comprehend those objects which aspire to certain privileged values – beauty, sublimity, significant form and so on. Danto, by contrast, rummages for the nature of art on its outskirts. Offering a painted be by Picasso or a paint rag to the reader, he asks, "If these things are art, what kind of thing is art?"

It intrigues Danto that such objects may be, indeed usually are, indistinguishable from their untransfigured counterparts. Duchamp's urinal is not distinguished from its fellow conveniences by any visible mark of its high station, yet (according to our author) it is art and its counterparts aren't. If two sensibly identical objects occupy distinct rungs on the ontological ladder, one being an art-work, the other a mere thing, you might fancy that the difference between them can't be aesthetically relevant. That this is not so is something which Danto, to his credit, sees. An object need not betray its aesthetic properties to the casual gaze. There are some values which no untrained eye can detect nor anything embody; only an emanation of consciousness can be informed by "style", "expression" and "historical values" which art has the unique good fortune to embody. Yet it is always possible for such an object to have a merely real Doppelgänger. What a work has in common with its merely real counterpart we may call its medium. The implication is that the

work is something over and above its material embodiment (or perhaps less excitingly, that it is merely that embodiment viewed from a certain angle).

Danto's argument builds up to a stunning climax: the work of art is an emblem of consciousness. The work is not an object in the world (though its substrate may be); rather, that it is in this sense that an art-work, like a Sartrean or Parmenidean consciousness, is not an object of consciousness (and so not a real thing). Artists don't see their style, they see through it. When an artist grows conscious of his style, it is no longer his style and, unless he moves beyond it, his old style becomes an affectation. Danto tosses in the Hegelian reminder that the style of an age is visible only to its successors. So far from their being objects of aesthetic appreciation, the properties which qualify an object as art are precisely those which the artist and his contemporaries cannot see, since they are modes and not objects of contemporary vision.

From this brief summary, it should be obvious that Danto's is no ordinary work of analytic philosophy, but rather yet another deposit of the Owl of Minerva. Still, the grand themes are supposed to be sustained by argument and, at the risk of spoiling the fun, some unresolved tensions in that argument deserve mention. For example, in his rhapsodic finale, Danto

takes metaphors to be, well, metaphors for art-works. Just as the metaphor can't replace the metaphor, so the description of a work, however illuminating, can't supersede it. But can Danto possibly argue that Duchamp's urinal, or any one of the minimalist and dada objects that through his eclectic canvas, is irreplaceable? Surely Duchamp could have taken a grinder at the art-world with any old urinal; nor is it obvious that the impact of the urinal would be much greater than a story about an artist who is idiotic enough to place a urinal on display. Whether or not Duchamp's joke is worth dwelling on and it is rather limp by now – his urinal certainly isn't. That it is not a possible object of aesthetic experience is precisely what makes the urinal such a suitable vehicle for Duchamp's anti-art gesture – but anti-art is just what there is no room for in Danto's scheme.

Much the same point applies to the emanations of that figure of Borges's imagination, Pierre Menard, who sets out to write a word-for-word duplicate of *Quixote* which, as being composed by a twentieth-century symbolist, must have quite a different meaning from the original. The labour of Menard would have been pointless: it is enough to read *Quixote* as though it had been written by him; indeed, it is enough to read Borges's story.

This is in itself a minor tension in Danto's work, but it is symptomatic of a more important flaw: Danto's inability or unwillingness to appreciate

the traditional "aesthetic" definition of art. Danto adverts to this Kantian tradition but he consistently undercuts it. In this tradition, art-work is an object which strikes a claim on our appreciation, something which is informed by the desire to be an object and occasion of an experience which is valuable in itself (rather than for some practical utility). No one would think Duchamp's urinal makes any such claim, so the traditional theory provides a space for such anti-art objects. They aren't mere things, but then again they aren't – don't want to be – art.

Danto rejects the aesthetic approach to art for two reasons, neither of them convincing. First, there is the obvious point that an art-work can't just be defined as a suitable object for aesthetic appreciation, since we appreciate many natural objects. But it is obvious that works can be distinguished from mere things in terms of their intentionality; art-works are designed to be appreciated, natural objects aren't (pace Archdeacon Paley). Danto's second objection is the more serious one that we can't say what it is for an experience to be aesthetic without first knowing what art is. But all he shows is that we can't know how to appreciate an object unless we know whether it is an art-work or a mere thing; but from this it doesn't follow that we are unable to define aesthetic

appreciation until we first define art. Danto's only real argument against the aesthetic definition of art is fallacious.

Nor is his claim that an artist's style is transparent to his contemporaries at all credible: some art may ask us to imagine away the canvas and the brush-strokes and to make-believe that we are just looking at the represented object, but even this art asks to be appreciated reflectively for its power to enact this fiction. Nor is there any obvious place in Danto's scheme for the pleasure we take in the brush-strokes of Rembrandt or the theatrical bravura of Tiepolo. In this respect, art seems to be unlike a state of visual consciousness. When we are visually attending to an object, we can't also be attending to our state of mind (on this spurious basis Comte erected his specious psychology). But surely the peculiar satisfaction of a painting consists in just this: that we can be simultaneously aware of the medium and of what something looks like from a certain point of view. The content of a picture also presents a dual object of attention; we both look make-believe at the object and at how it would look from a certain point of view. Depletion is thus an expression of visual consciousness and no mere analogue of it. And this is which explains why a representation of an object can't be superseded by the experience of it.

To withstand the Flood

Anthony Thorlby

GERSHOM SCHOLEM

Walter Benjamin: the Story of a Friendship.
242pp. Faber. £10.
0 4571 11970 0

This history of the remarkable friendship between Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin was published in 1975 in German; then, translated into English, in America in 1981; now here. A lifelong relationship between two writers of such distinction must necessarily be of interest, whatever its nature and content. Much of it is already on record, because correspondence came with the years to be a more frequent and extensive form of contact than meeting. Two further factors raise the interest of this relationship above the merely personal. Moreover, The first lies in the tragic history of the period: both men were German Jewish intellectuals. The very index of this volume reads like the roll-call of a doomed generation. The other factor is less historical than philosophical, though its philosophical character is not speculative or technical, but practical and potentially dangerous.

For it was often, though by no means exclusively, in the minds of Jewish intellectuals that elements came together which were fabled to release tremendous ideological energy. Their combination led to a kind of fusion capable of destroying modern: liberal culture – and, conversely, these elements may have been, loosely, religion and revolution. They sound so reassuringly distinct that nothing more would seem to be necessary, to avoid danger, than to recognize them for what they are – one spiritual and otherworldly, the other material and this-worldly – and keep them safely apart. But it is possible also to argue that this difference is merely metaphorical, the product of two different ways of thinking about the same thing. If this is so, then, to elaborate on the model of nuclear physics, it is in fact the same element which is brought together from different sides until it combines into a critical mass and generates such a colossal destructive power. For centuries, matter and spirit, body and soul, have been regarded as being forever separate (until the Last Day). This search for the element of sameness in them, and for the possibility of joining them into a revolutionary state of unity by means of progressive dialectical interactions, has provided the intellectual stimulation for much of the most radical thinking in Europe during the past two centuries and given it its frequently apocalyptic tone.

It makes little difference whether the sameness is thought to be essentially spiritual, in the manner of Hegel, or essentially material, in the manner of Marx. For Benjamin, the single element was language; he rejected the commonsense view that in its nonverbal things express themselves through immaterial words. It is this experimentation with one universal element, and the combination of increasing amounts of it derived from different sources, through reductive

critique, subconscious association, and poststructuralist dialectic, which leads to apocalypse. Kafka, for instance, whom Scholem and Benjamin discussed with the intuitive understanding of men working in the same medium as he had, declared that there is nothing besides the spiritual world. But the spirit was that of hell; and Benjamin fell victim to it when it possessed the continent of Europe. Not surprisingly, neither Scholem nor Benjamin had much time for the pious platitudes of Max Brod about the spirituality of Kafka.

Scholem's book is strangely subdued, often briefly factual, and reserved in its comments. He knew, of course, when writing it, that much of what he had thought about Benjamin's ideas could already be consulted by German readers in one edition of their correspondence, with the prospect of a second and fuller one to come. Or they might read on article like "Walter Benjamin und sein Engel", which penetrates more deeply into the workings of his friend's mind than any section of this book. (It offers a brilliant analysis of the significance which Paul Klee's picture "Angelus novus" held for Benjamin, who for many years had it on his wall and even crammed it into his suitcase when he fled from Paris.) It is necessary to look up a letter Scholem merely refers to, if one wants to appreciate the quality of thought that lies behind such a phrase as "a sharp, frontal attack on his (Benjamin's) new shift and position". The shift in question is Benjamin's move towards Marxism, which had become evident in his commentaries on Brecht and his long essay on Karl Kraus. Scholem's attack had indeed been sharp, but much less a bare protest than the one word "frontal" suggests. He had accused Benjamin of self-deception then, as he does again in more muted way here, and warned him against it. But the letter goes into considerable detail in order to expose the contrast and – in Scholem's view – incompatibility between Benjamin's real way of thinking and his newly feigned one.

Much can be gleaned elsewhere in this book of the circumstances, readings and conversations in which Benjamin's earlier, or "real" cast of mind had been formed. From the first, he had been interested in the totality of experience; that is, with the forms of "man's intellectual and psychological connection with the world". Language and art were to him the most revealing points of connection and consciousness between spirit and nature. Needless to say, he was reading Kant and Nietzsche. He went so far as to "accept" myth alone as the "world" and it was not long before he became "then and for a long time an adherent of mythological views of language". For Benjamin, his youth (and for Scholem all his life), the ultimate secret of both myth and language lay in the Bible; Judaism offered the best point of departure for understanding it. Scholem is able to quote from a diary entry he made at the time:

Benjamin's mind revolves and will long continue to revolve around the phenomenon of myth, which he approaches from the most diverse angles: from history . . . from literature . . . from religion. . . .

ever have a philosophy of my own, he said to me, it somehow will be a philosophy of Judaism.

This was Benjamin's "real" way of thinking, in Scholem's view, and in 1931 his friend seemed to him to be betraying it. We get glimpses of "very different points of view" already in the early 1920s. Not directly on the subject of politics but on the relationship between historical circumstances, the use of language, and religious truth. "We discussed the thesis whether the Jews' special attachment to the world of language might be traced to their thousands of years of occupation with sacred texts, with revelation as the linguistic basic fact and its reflection in all spheres of language." There was even "heated debate" about Karl Kraus's "attitude toward, indeed addition to, language". Scholem reports simply that Benjamin often asked him to elaborate in writing on his reflections on "the derivation of Kraus's style from the Hebrew prose and poetry of medieval Jewry – the language of the great halakists and of the 'mosaic' style, the poetic prose in which linguistic scraps of sacred texts are whirled around kaleidoscope-like, and are journalistically, polemically, descriptively, and even erotically profaned." It was not Scholem but Benjamin who elaborated on this technique, which helped him find his own style: the style which enabled him to cross the divide between aesthetics and worldliness, spirituality and social criticism – and to present it as a form of dialectical materialism. The very style to which Scholem objected.

Scholem's book is informative, and indirectly revealing, especially about the early years. He mentions the grounds of Benjamin's interest in Nietzsche as the only person in the nineteenth century who had seen experience historically. Burckhardt's ethic, by contrast, was not that of history, but of humanism: a perceptive distinction, which also points forward. Another note made by Scholem at the time was: "He is falling full speed into the system." The system was the typically dialectical one which German intellectuals of that generation employed to bring together the most primitive epochs of world history and the "world" of personal creativity, intelligence, and what these socially alienated, cerebral men called "experience". They began from a conception of the spectral, an age or state still accessible in dreams and daydreams about which "Benjamin read me a lengthy note". Scholem recalls. Then came the mythic, whose real content was the anonymous revolution that politicized against the spectral and brought its age to an end. Myth was still "demonic", however, and there had to come a necessary third stage, the age of "revelation" – which I proposed calling the messianic age instead. Scholem points out that here was the genesis of reflections "he made many years later in his notes 'Lehre vom Ähnhilchem'". In two dense sentences that follow, Scholem suggests that learning to "read" the world's surface, on the basis of linguistically conceived similarities between things, broke the demonic secret of myth in the same way that

"the revelation of Holy Writ" had done.

These men were debating in effect what half a century later has become familiar in the no less revolutionary vocabularies of linguistics, structuralism, deconstruction, and the like; and debating it with a better grasp of what they were doing. Not that Scholem was a revolutionary; the study of Judaism's relationship to myth became for him a matter of most scholarly research. But for Benjamin, this "reading in the configurations of the surface" and his stylistic experiments with the magical origins and potential of writing, did have revolutionary implications, providing him with the most powerful source of literary-prophetic inspiration.

Many elements of Benjamin's later work appear, then, to have been present from the beginning: his sense of history, language, and dialectic, as well as his tendency towards system. The importance of Scholem's book lies less in its attempt to separate as much as possible of the "real" Benjamin from Marxist materialism, than in its (perhaps unintentional) indication of the explosive combination of religion and revolution that lay ready to hand for minds able to think in this apocalyptic way. The break in Benjamin's career so marked as unforeseeable, or so hypocritical as Scholem seems to have found it? Moral reprimand was at all events inadequate to stop an inherent momentum and development in his ideas. And where else on earth could they, in the 1930s, possibly go? "From my very particular position in language philosophy", Benjamin wrote, "to the perspective of dialectical materialism there is a way across (Vermittlung), even though it is a taut and problematic one. To the saturated condition of bourgeois scholarship, however, there is certainly not one." There was perhaps a third move possible, which Scholem made when he went to Palestine. Benjamin was tempted by it; the strange story of why it never could be arranged appears here to have been due less to deviousness (as has been suggested), than to Benjamin's reluctance to give up the dangerous transition and in-between ground where his genius fed. Scholem passed such severe judgment on his friend from his committed situation in Jericho; he wrote with the assurance of a man who had put behind him the impermissible dialectical play with contraries that was to destroy Europe.

How well Scholem understood the brilliant opportunities for devastating effects which that contrariety offered: "Your work acquires the stamp of adventurousness, of . . . fascinating strangeness, . . . ambiguously, dangerously, erotically. . . . Your dynamic could well be recognized by a [mere] spiritual intelligence or interest as more powerful than his own." And Scholem has been proved right by the tremendous fascination which Benjamin has exercised over the minds of the non-Party Left in the West in recent decades. His challenge to Benjamin, that he should see what would happen if he tried to work within the Party, could be addressed to many of the intellectuals who admire him.

The word he uses to describe the mixture of verbal and intellectual categories which lends Benjamin's writings their alluring shimmer is not telling: *Interfrazerscheinungen* – the spark and sparkle where interference of one mode of writing and thinking with another takes place.

By contrast, Scholem is somewhat simplistic in suggesting that his friend was guilty of plain moral error, namely, self-deception. It may be true that there is no other way of keeping clear of a mire in which one can only sink, than by wise resolve. But Benjamin was no hypocrite and did not enjoy the best of both worlds. Moral criticism might even be thrown back at Scholem, by saying that he opted out, retreating from the most problematic area of modern thought. Benjamin was right: there is a way across from the philosophy of language to dialectical materialism, or (if that word has to be reserved for orthodox Marxists only) to revolutionary radicalism, as it is called. The study of language, as subsequent developments have shown, has been at the vanguard of the most gifted and most catching Western intellectuals; the book has yet to be written which analyses why this is possible and what exactly is wrong with it. Scholem did not write it, least of all in this reticent story of a friendship, but he reminds us of how much one is needed. The friendship itself, between the scholar who left the arena and the writer who stayed to become the sacrificial victim of a tragically flawed intelligence, tradition and society, contains the essence of the problem. Perhaps it can be no other solution than to draw a line under the failed experiment in resolving the human condition by non-religious means.

A religious need and a secularized religious answer, a religiosity that is metaphorical and poetic (and known to be such): must not that state of affairs, that intolerable spiritual tension, be led to a necessary close, "while there is still time"? As Scholem once said to Benjamin? Or is it the ineluctable condition of creativity in the present time? Can the Word – should it have capital as it does in some contexts here – if it has the power to save, run on the genius and the torment of a *littérateur*? Or on the (second) literature which Benjamin was capable of understanding with something of the mystical reverence and awe which he poured over and analysed scripture. When Benjamin sent, in 1937, a copy of his *Deutsche Menschen* to Scholem, he inscribed it as follows: "May you, Gershom, find a chamber in this book which I built when the Fascist flood started to rise." He had built it, as the inscription in his sister's copy says, "after the Jewish model". Scholem himself is moved to an assertion beyond the bounds of what he usually allows himself:

"The author has captured in a book what has constructed like an ark – that which can withstand the Flood. Just as the Jews took refuge from the persecutions in the 'Writ', so Benjamin's book, Benjamin's own book constituted a saving element. Did it? Can it?"

Lines of identity

Andrew Lincoln

MORRIS EAVES

William Blake's Theory of Art
217pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £13.90 (paperback), £25.50 (hardback).
0 691 03990 9

T. S. Eliot once compared Blake's philosophy to a piece of home-made furniture put together out of odds and ends found lying about the house. Now that scholars have reclaimed more of its contemporary context, Blake's thought seems like a complete rebuilding of the house itself from the original materials. In this study, Morris Eaves contributes to the process of reclamation, arguing that Blake's aesthetic theory re-establishes Enlightenment principles on romantic grounds.

Eaves begins by examining the relationship between Blake's advocacy of the "wiry bounding line" and the preference for line over colour in contemporary aesthetic doctrine. In Blake's thought, he suggests, line is associated not simply with intellect, but with the imaginative "identity" of the artist, and thus Blake's theory of art is expressive, "opposed at all essential points to classical and neoclassical mimesis". Working outwards from artist to works to audience, Eaves examines in detail the implications of this theory, offering a

corrective to those critics who see Blake "as part of neoclassicism in the visual arts or of Wordsworthian-romanticism in literature". When he considers the ideas that Blake attacked – for example, Reynolds's view that invention can be taught, and that the arts are progressive – Eaves is vigorously critical, often penetrating. The unquestioned assumption that the form and content of a work may be separated for analytical purposes is examined with unflinching tenacity, and Eaves effectively exposes the unresolved contradictions that arise from it in the writings of modern critics, who praise the vision of Blake's art while lamenting the lack of technical merit.

But Eaves's approach to Blake's own thought seems less critical. His intention to "establish with some system and documentation what had previously been established piecemeal" entails a preference for a "monolithic" Blake, whose various and sometimes fragmentary comments on art can be reconstructed into a single, coherent theory. Eaves finds the basis of such coherence in the principle of imaginative "identity", which is completely too other aspects of Blake's thought. The principle becomes, for example, the basis of a beguilingly simple distinction between Coleridge (who is interested in the processing that the imagination does) and Blake (who is interested in what

the imagination is), a distinction which is not qualified by reference to Blake's poetry, where descriptions of imaginative processes, of labour at furnaces and at looms, become increasingly important. Eaves's references to Blake's practice as an artist and poet are in fact highly selective, and are used to illustrate rather than to test his own assumptions. Blake's large colour paintings, for example, which combine the easily reconciled with Eaves's central thesis: if such prints reveal the true imaginative identity of Blake "then they may be more linear in Blake's sense of the term than Flaxman's outlines, which by and large seem less autobiographical than Blake's colour prints". (We may wonder whether, on similar grounds, the "unorganized" Blots & Blurs of Rubens & Titian should be regarded as more linear than Blake's prints.) Eaves simply will not allow the coherence of his exposition to be disturbed by a serious examination of the developments, changes of direction and inconsistencies that other critics have found in Blake's work. As a result, his discussion remains theoretical in a limiting sense.

There is much of interest in this provocative and energetic study, but when the relationship between theory and practice has been examined more closely, the view of Blake that emerges may be rather more complicated than the one presented here.

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Taking after God

Redmond O'Hanlon

PETER KEMP

H. G. Wells and the Culminating Age: Biological Themes and Imaginative Obsessions
254pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 25701 4

H. G. Wells was "small, sickly, common, selfish, vain, angry" and possessed by a "perpetually vibrating physical and sexual vanity", according to an outraged discarded mistress, Odette Keun. A Fabian champion, he won Beatrice Webb's disapproval for his "dining with duchesses and lunching with countesses" and wrung a howl from the heart of the lovely Amber Reeves, with whom he had eloped to La Tourette, because "He kept hankering to go back whenever he got invitations from Lady Desborough or anyone." A tubby prophet of the coming harmony of the World State, he had a petulant contempt for his fellow workers-for-peace which pulled the pin on committee after idealistic committee. A would-be hard-headed politician, he met Stalin (Wells: "I have come to you to ask you what you are doing to change the world." Stalin: "Not so very much"), declared him to be "essentially self-centric and modest" and reported that "no one is afraid of him and everybody trusts him". Believing the individual to be of little moment and the species to be of paramount importance, Wells allowed himself to cut loose from the painful social origins which were the source of his early inspiration, and from his hard-won biological knowledge, into a stratosphere from which he could tell Beatrice Webb "I would rather be after God's pattern, gross, various, fecund and comprehensive, inexact and continually unexpected." All of which makes him, in retrospect, an immensely likeable man.

But while it is true enough, as Chesterton remarked, that Wells "sold us birthright for a pot of messianic", the size of his early gift is more than large enough for us to forget his later career, to honour him for the *Klippers*-world novels and, for more remarkable tolerances, for "the scientific romances, and especially for *The Time Machine*, the greatest piece of science fiction yet written.

In *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Age* Peter Kemp traces Wells's career with a light touch, making gossip and entertaining connections between life and work, keeping his hero at a distance, pursuing his personal foibles and intellectual inconsistencies with guarded amusement. But if you come to this book, as I did, excited by its subtitle and expecting to discover how Wells read Darwin; if and when he read Wallace and whether he

believed in the latent adaptation of the brain; if Galton and Pearson had any place in his prescription for the breeding programme of the race or Weismann in his imagined mechanism of heredity; whether Spencer or Bain or Maudsley or Ribot affected his picture of the evolution of the emotions or of the workings of memory or the unconscious; or if Lubbock or Tylor or Frazer moulded his image of savage societies, you will be disappointed, and annoyed.

How general were Wells's ideas of biological degeneration? Was he impressed by Nordau? What did he think of the re-discovery of Mendel's work and particular genetics? Might we, at the very least, expect to find *Descent of Man* on his bedside table? Does Darwin's conviction, for instance, that sexual selection has made man more advanced in evolutionary attainment than woman lie behind Wells's more belligerent pronouncements on the subject? Did Wells all agree with his own Dr Martineau in *The Secret Places of the Heart* that "women were quite incapable of producing ideas in the same way that men do" and believe that scientific orthodoxy was on his side?

Peter Kemp appears to be unaware of the size and the interest of the subject he proposes for him the biological themes in H. G. Wells are simply man's need "to eat, mate, find a congenial habitat, and survive danger - by fighting, escaping, or co-operating with the other members of his species", which is like announcing that Henry James pursues chemical themes because all his characters take in oxygen. However, if we wave goodbye to an opportunity to bring the murky fears of the *fin de siècle* to life via one of its great representative figures in the history of contemporary popular ideas, and remain content to allow this thin biology to be, but a convenient framework for "critical" literary discussion, Kemp has many interesting insights to offer us.

There are other cheering compensations, too. I much enjoyed learning that Odette Keun, rightly impressed by the genius of the early Wells, expressed her literary acumen in a stirring, pioneer exercise in Practical Criticism. At their first meeting, in a darkened hotel bedroom in Geneva, she submitted to the author and his work, "I did not know whether he was a giant or a gnome," she wrote, "but it did not matter." It may have mattered in the morning; but then her chance of matching his own desires was equally small. For Wells's sexual tastes were formed early, by a close scrutiny of Britannia, "bare armed, bare necked, showing beautiful bare bosoms, revealing shining thighs", in *Punch*; and so he craved, as he wished

fulfillingly proclaimed to Rebecca West in 1917, greater satisfactions than Isabel, or Miss Kingsmill (who came to the Welles' house to retouch negatives), or Catherine Robbins or Amber Reeves, or Rebecca West herself, or Odette Keun, could provide, for, he hoped:

I am a Male
I am a Male
I am a MALE
I have got Great Britain Pregnant

But to begin with the eating - "butter" was the first word Wells wrote, as Kemp tells us, and it was a thought which stayed with him until he died. Between whites, in *Beauvoir*, he left instructions for his own preparation: "It should ever fall to my lot to be cooked, may I be fried in potatoes and butter. May I be fried with potatoes and good butter made from the milk of the cow. God send I am spared boiling; the prison of the pot, the rattling lid, the evil darkness, the greasy water." Kemp (his prose only occasionally self becoming borborygmus with half-digested wads of card-index) sensibly pursues Wells's fierce interest in food to the small boy in the dank basement kitchen of Atlas House - the absurdly misnamed little shop in Bromley where his father, a part-time professional cricketeer and his mother, an ex-housekeeper, attempted to make a living by selling china plates and cups and saucers. Wells, mildly starved by his family's poverty and mildly poisoned by his mother's atrocious cooking, suffered alternate pains of hunger and indigestion, and he always attributed his stunted growth to the early chaos in his stomach. Peter Kemp believes that, together with his early habitat, it was in fact responsible for a great deal more.

Combine the Atlas House basement, the underground passages (complete with ventilation shafts) used by the household staff at Uppark (where Mrs Wells eventually returned to service), the subterranean rooms of his London aunts with whom he lodged as a student, even the below-street debating theatre of the Normal School of Science itself, with Wells's unease about eating, and the Morlocks, the proletariat below-stairs, the hidden mechanicals in the engine-room, the downtrodden miners who only clamber out of the earth at night, the rat-like tenders of the new city sewers, spring to life. H. G. Wells's tentacle-fingered engineers and master-cannibals of the future are compounded of more homely inspirations than we might have supposed.

All of which is probably true; but then Bernard Bergonzi was the first to say so, in his pioneer work *The Early H. G. Wells: a Study of the Scientific Romances* (1961), which Kemp does not mention, even in his bibliography. Bergonzi also pointed out that *The Time Machine* abounds in paradisaical and demoniacal imagery, and that the Time Traveller's descent from the pastoral playground of the terminally decadent, sexually ambiguous, vegetarian, anti-industrial Eliot (who more or less limit their activity to "faint squirms of idyllic petting" as V. S. Pritchett remarked) to the underworld of the Morlocks is a journey of almost undisturbed mythical significance, resonant with literary memories. And into it, having just stepped off his (albeit rather special) 1890s bicycle, goes a significantly well-informed, amiable, gregarious, interested, late-Victorian bourgeois clubman.

There are many other fascinating if less general "biological themes" in *The Time Machine* which Kemp might have investigated. In *The Origin of Species*, for example, Darwin discusses, with great excitement, the special adaptations of cave-dwelling animals, those creatures from "the outer world" who have withdrawn, down the generations, "into the deeper and deeper recesses of the Kentucky caves", species which he imagines spectrally shaping their global eyes unseen through the ages (or losing them altogether) and free of the selection pressures for the colours of camouflage or display, shedding their pigment, turning ghostly white. Are they, too, part of the intellectual ancestry of the Morlocks? They share with them, after all, as H. G. Wells writes, that "bleached look common in

most animals that live largely in the dark - the white fish of the Kentucky caves, for instance" and, "living in... impenetrable darkness" the eyes of the Morlocks "were abnormally large and sensitive, just as are the pupils of the abysmal fishes, and they reflected the light in the same way."

But then Kemp has given himself, or his publisher has allowed him, little space for such leisurely speculation. About 110 other books by Wells clamour for his attention. They stretch from *A Text Book of Biology* (1893) to *Mind at the End of Its Tether* (1945). Behind the brilliant young romantic scientist (whose enormous wealth came almost at once - in France alone, the fortunes of *Mercur de France* were founded on sales of the *Time Machine*), beside the one or two good schoolmasters (*The Outline of History*, *A Short History of the World*), there are a great many trampish-looking characters, starving comics in grubby mackintoshes, wild-eyed World-Staters in sandals, and also slightly seedy and exceedingly angry middle-aged men with nothing of much substance to say. But Peter Kemp is almost uniformly kind; he houses them all with sustained enthusiasm.

This book provides a praiseworthy survey of all Wells's work, an arduous and difficult task energetically done. But somehow the genius of Wells has escaped its confines - underestimating enough, given that Wells himself was incapable of retaining it.

Meeting the market

Mark Casserley

RICHARD H. TAYLOR

The Neglected Hardy: Thomas Hardy's Lesser Novels
205pp. Macmillan. £17.50.
0 333 31051 9

Hardy's reputation as a novelist, Richard H. Taylor suggests, is based on only half his output, the other being regarded as mistakes or experiments. Taylor believes that the novels ought to be read as a whole, and that these neglected works "play an essential part in the dynamic process of Hardy's fiction". He therefore sets out to estimate the value of each of the "lesser" novels, how they are related to the more famous works, what themes they have in common, and what can be learnt from them about Hardy's development.

The novels in question span Hardy's career, from the appearance of *Desperate Remedies* to the book publication of *The Well-Beloved*. Taylor is particularly interesting on the artistic and economic constraints Hardy faced throughout: in a sense, all the novels were pot-boilers, written to earn Hardy's living, and he had to pay careful attention to the susceptibilities of his editors and the public who read serials. Hardy's relationship with this public was a troubled one for other reasons, however. In the early novels, as Taylor shows, he was feeling his way towards a style and a method, and at the same time trying to escape from the limiting aesthetic expectations of his readers, without losing their allegiance. Many of the lesser works, according to Taylor, were affected by these external pressures, which forced Hardy to compromise his artistic intentions. The major novels were either strong enough for the controversial aspects to appear unimportant, or were defended more vigorously by their author.

A *Laodicean* presents an interesting case. Taylor shows how circumstances militated against its being a success: Hardy's serious illness of 1880-81 had much to do with its shortcomings, since in order to fulfil his contract he had to continue the novel by dictating to his wife. It begins promisingly, with an intimacy in the depiction of George Somerset, and a subtle blend of the early scenes, and the characters' emotions in the early scenes, and the successes, and the intellectual and social conflicts that are one in the novel are dissipated by an excess of plotting. Taylor focuses on the struggle between the modern

spirit and "medievalism", but he amplifies the importance of these issues beyond anything justified by the novel. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for its "lesser" status. In the major works, the author's design is fully realised as an inescapable "given" of the situation. Integral to the world-view the novel presents. But Taylor's particular approach does enable him to bring out thematic connections with more famous novels: Sue Bridehead in Paula Power's "spiritual successor", for example.

The Well-Beloved is even more closely related to *Jude the Obscure*. Passages from the serial version of the novel were adapted for its successor, and these excisions weakened the book. Taylor sees the hero's predicament in terms of the search for a Platonic Ideal in his beloved, Helene, to present Plerton's fate as a tragic one, but the novel is not quite recognizable from his account of it, which short-circuits Hardy's own adjustments of attitude to the character. It is noteworthy that Plerton cosses his obsession. He is anxious not to lose it, because it protects him from commitment.

Hardy's bitterly ironic attitude to his own career in prose and to his "ground-level young critics" lies behind the revised ending of *The Well-Beloved*, with Plerton losing all aesthetic feeling and having extreme old age, rather unceremoniously thrust upon him. Taylor documents the limiting circumstances within which Taylor proceeded, and Hardy's changes of direction from novel to novel, but he is less successful in showing the "dynamic process" at work. One wants to hear more than just that there is a "pivotal" connection between some of Hardy's concerns at a particular time, and his current novel. Taylor believes that Hardy's novels should be read as "symbolic poems" (the meaning of this phrase is not clear), but this should not preclude a close examination of narrative technique and the handling of character. The lesser novels form a distinct aesthetic group is not finally proven, and the assertion that "form a series of essential pivots on which Hardy's entire career as a novelist turns" is only partially convincing: they are often experimental in nature, but the same might be said of a number of the major novels. Nevertheless, as a survey of Hardy's work, this book is a useful and interesting one, and it is a pity that it is so short.

The combined brutality and idealism of the nineteenth century is perhaps a little too strange for us to grasp. But the next period that Hardy wrote, the years 1870-70, looks strikingly more like our own. By this time books for mothers - often written by mothers - had become a new genre, and there were a number of magazines of child care. Mothers, much more than in the rough old times, were seen as moulders of human beings; and most classes, as Hardyment points out, did not turn children over to domestics; nursemaids helped out, but the age of the "domestic nanny" was yet to come. Mothers must cherish and educate and instil morality: it was a long way from the eighteenth-century notion that there was nothing particular to do but "keep the child sweet and clean; to

Crisis around the cradle

Rosemary Dinnage

CHRISTINA HARDYMENT

Dream Babies: Child Care from Locke to Spock
334pp. Cape. £9.95.
0 234 01910 4

Parents bemused by the spate of books on child care, the gulf between their own upbringing and their children's, and the overwhelming modern sense of responsibility for them, will find *Dream Babies* reassuring as well as amusing. Christina Hardyment has written it, she says, to demonstrate how shifting and relative the apparently authoritative canons of child care are; taking your methods straight from the book, she says, is about as sensible as seeding for your false teeth by mail order.

Christina Hardyment's account is also a contribution to the school of historians who have shocked us with evidence of past brutality to children and concluded that tenderness towards the young is a twentieth-century invention. In many cases, as she says, this is like using the records of the NSPCC as evidence of modern child-care practice. In fact there has always been cruelty to children - as well as exceptional devotion - sometimes unconscious and sometimes deliberate; our own century's particular version emerges very clearly from her story.

This is not to say that there is no substance in the evidence amassed by historians of childhood, nor to deny that our predecessors in this, as in so many things, were not better or worse, but merely different. They did not make the absolute distinction that we do between abortion and infanticide, and of course they had no firm expectation that a small child would survive for long. Hence the account by Boswell, a fond father, of the death of one of his babies:

He expired a little before nine. I was as calm as I could wish, and resigned to the dispensations of GOD . . . There was something of dreariness in the blank in our nursery. Yet the gentle death of the sweet innocent, and his appearance like waxwork and at peace after his sufferings, affected us pleasantly. . . . Worthy Grange, who had been up last night and shown friendly concern dined with us. He and I drank chiefly cider and were very comfortable. I was even in admirable spirits, moderately affected by the death of my child. I uttered several lively sayings, some of them indeed prompted by him, which will be found in my *Boswelliana*.

Christina Hardyment starts her history around the middle of the eighteenth century, with the midwife delivered, swaddled, breast-fed, by mother or wet-nurse) infant, dirty and dandied, cosy but dispensable. The forerunners, at this period, of modern baby books were pamphlets of elementary hygiene for nurses in charge of the great numbers of foundlings thrown up by eighteenth-century urban conditions. Such publications were concerned only with physical well-being; the true influence, in the century, was a moral and philosophical one - Rousseau's *Emile*. Rousseau's own children, as is well known, were all sent to the foundling hospital, where perhaps someone was trying to keep a few babies alive with a French version of one of these early manuals.

The combined brutality and idealism of the eighteenth century is perhaps a little too strange for us to grasp. But the next period that Hardyment writes about, the years 1870-70, looks strikingly more like our own. By this time books for mothers - often written by mothers - had become a new genre, and there were a number of magazines of child care. Mothers, much more than in the rough old times, were seen as moulders of human beings; and most classes, as Hardyment points out, did not turn children over to domestics; nursemaids helped out, but the age of the "domestic nanny" was yet to come. Mothers must cherish and educate and instil morality: it was a long way from the eighteenth-century notion that there was nothing particular to do but "keep the child sweet and clean; to

tumble it and toss it about a good deal play with it, and keep it in good humour".

At the same time, with the age of real and pseudo-scientific discovery approaching, the earliest signs of what Hardyment calls a "mythology of neglect" were appearing. Both reader and tough approaches had their advocates, as always; some of the latter were now proposing three-hourly feeds, cold baths, a little salutory crying, a separate cot for baby instead of mother's or nursemaid's bed. The introduction of the pram around the 1850s truly distanced the child from other human bodies. The great age of official harshness was, however, still to come.

Late Victorian to Edwardian times, swung a little further against the primacy of the child. Like the eighteenth-century woman of fashion, the Edwardian lady had a demanding social life; but she could turn the child over to nanny and to bottle-feeding rather than to wet-nurse, which on the whole gave it a better chance of survival in spite of unhygienic early feeding-bottles. Feminism and the New Woman had arrived, and even birth control (it was in the 1870s that Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh were prosecuted for their family planning pamphlet, vaguely but delightfully titled *The Fruits of Philosophy*). Having been entreated to immerse themselves in the nursery, women were now exhorted not to be so sloppy. "Do not drown in your child", exhorted one expert; "Infants up to the age of one year old should be neither

amusing nor amused", declared another crisply. Yet around this same time, and even before the turn of the century, children were being studied closely and carefully and literally as never before, and never again until quite recently. These celebrated hour-by-hour accounts were carried out by amateurs and are still fascinating. Darwin - in child development certainly an amateur - had his own "Biographical Sketch of an Infant" published in *Mind*.

What now approached was our own period of maximum self-consciousness about the upbringing of children. The twentieth century might - and to the historians of childhood does - seem to be the age of the child. Child labour abolished; lady philanthropists taking notions of hygiene into the slums; education free and universal; corporal punishment in disfavour, and the movement for kindergartens and educational play under way. But all this good sense and rationality also led right away from childhood's irrational needs, for comfort and contact and security; affection was to become confounded with retrogressiveness and lack of hygiene.

There were many contributory reasons. The germ theory of disease revolutionized child care but also brought all kinds of things into disfavour, from kissing to warm nurseries. Hospitals had become safe and clean, but routines suitable for mass care of the sick were transferred - officially, at any rate - to the home. With hospital nursing a respectable profession, the first training colleges

for nursery nurses were founded, where the natural impulse of woman-child bonding was generally educated out of existence. Touching, the child's *modus vivendi* and lifeline, was under a taboo. Solitude, fresh air, feeding by (play) convulsed "unwashed babies of the long, hungry night-time sessions of 'crying it out'". And the establishment of norms, which are no more than averages for developmental milestones, led to weighing and measuring end anxiety and, of course, ferocious toilet training.

Freud made an inadvertent contribution to it all via the misconception that, since neurotics have disturbed parental relations, the solution is to cut out parenting. The behaviourists, Watson and Skinner, certainly contributed via Watson's *Psychological Care of the Infant and Child* (become "a professional, not a sentimentalist masquerading under the name of Mother") and Skinner's "Heir Conditioner", the "Skinner box" he invented to a fanfare of publicity for the cradle-less, touch-free baby. And Truby King, the New Zealander whose rigid methods ruled nurseries for thirty years, contributed most of all. Christina Hardyment is charitable about Truby King, but then she is not a product of the Truby King era.

She rounds off her account with a substantial section on the "enjoy-yourself" child-care books of today - Spock, Jolly, Leach *et al.* She has, of course, her omissions and her prejudices. She has rather a down on

nice Penelope Leach, and is not reverent enough, in my opinion, towards the Blessed Benjamin Spock. On the other hand, she has a soft spot for Mrs Sydney Frankenburg (1930-1940ish), with her lunatic ideas about dressing up in woollies and breast-feeding out of doors throughout the winter. She does not mention the influential weekly *Nursery World* (than which I read little else for about five years of my life); she does not seem to be fully aware of the influence of studies of evacuees, particularly at Anna Freud's Hampstead Nurseries, in moulding Bowlby's writing on separation trauma. Perhaps she might have mentioned the diabolical nineteenth-century pedagogues Schreber and his proven influence on his son Daniel Schreber, who wrote the famous account of his madness; or *The Prelude* ("Bless'd the Infant Babe") and the Romantics; or made more of the links with literature.

Scratch the surface and all of us feel deeply about the treatment of children, having all been one. Some feel impelled to get it down in a book; and every kind of message, from hatred to sentimentality to blessedly true imaginative sympathy, filters through into them. Implicit metaphors succeed one another - children are hardy perennials, or battery chickens, or Amazonian natives; mythologies rise and fall like empires. But all the while (as books like John and Elizabeth Newton's have shown) there is a broad central stream of averagely adequate care flowing routinely on, irrespective of fashion.

Union difficulties

Helge Rubinstein

JULIA BRANNEN and JEAN COLLARD

Marriages in Trouble: The process of seeking help.
266pp. Tavistock. £13.50.
0 422 78100 2

Everyone knows how stark the figures are: 95 per cent of women and 91 per cent of men will have been married by the time they are forty, but one in four marriages break down in the first four years, and nearly thirty per cent of all marriages now end in the divorce courts. Of the marriages where one partner has been previously divorced, 16 per cent break down (hope does not ultimately triumph over experience). The public cost of such statistics, let alone the private pain, is vast, yet as a society we offer precious little assistance to those in marital distress.

How does someone whose marriage is in difficulties obtain help? The authors of this book, one a social scientist, the other a research sociologist, set out to investigate the "help-seeking careers" of clients of two different agencies: a hospital unit for marital therapy (part of the National Health Service) and the Marriage Guidance Council (a grant-aided voluntary organization). Their aim was not to evaluate the service the clients received but simply to discover how they got there. A somewhat limited area for research, and their findings will not hold many surprises for those who already work in the field of marital therapy, but the book makes salutary, though depressing reading for anyone in the "helping professions".

Women are the chief help seekers, men are more likely to believe that emotional problems should be sorted out by the individual himself. In one case (it was not until the husband had "hit bottom" by taking an overdose that he no longer felt it was "degrading" to ask for help. It is still more respectable to seek treatment for a medical problem than an emotional one, and the GP is usually the first port of call. Since wives are the mostly likely to make the first approach but the majority of GPs are still men, the difference in attitudes often prolongs the process and delays the help, when appropriate help is offered, sometimes tragically. The authors cite one example where a wife was treated for four years by her GP and a hospital

psychiatrist for depression and repeated overdoses, and not until a locum doctor took a fresh look at the case was it discovered that the husband had been impotent throughout the four years of the marriage. Most doctors in the sample did not wish to involve themselves at all in their patients' marriages; only two of four doctors approached by battered wives recognized that battering had taken place, and only one of these offered help. Only one GP was described by the patient as "a doctor and a half" for willingness to listen, and this doctor, significantly, was a woman.

Furthermore, if it is the wife who presents the problem, and the GP is a man, by taking her complaints at face value and treating the wife for "her" problem, whether medically or by referral to a psychiatrist or counsellor, he reinforces the view of the woman as the one who carries the problem. This, according to the authors, suits many husbands, and is often cultivated by marriage counsellors who do not insist on seeing both partners: "when she feels she's doing all the work" (by going to the counsellor) "I'll go along and make a show", said one husband.

Where patients were referred to a psychiatrist, they often found themselves still being treated for their symptoms, with scant attention to marital conditions that may have caused them. Where the doctors recommended seeing a marriage counsellor, it was usually only a suggestion and not a direct referral - a situation that reflects as much on the Marriage Guidance Council as on the doctors, since the Councils mostly do not take referrals and counsellors do not always respond in a sufficiently professional way to doctors who have sent clients.

Only twenty-eight couples were interviewed. It is a pity that the sample was so small. The authors do not seem to have encountered any of the younger breed of GPs who are increasingly being trained to look for the emotional stresses which lie behind many of the physical symptoms that are

Epithalamion

(for Bridget and Stephen)

The old couple, owners of this crabby, marine hotel, sit in their armchairs like Canute, talking of nothing but the ancient death of their Great Orange.

Out on the terrace, the proud, paternalistic postman cracks their breakfast: eggs on cement. Our honeymoon, seedy and British. Character to proficiency -

no shy, intrusive maid, bringing us champagne. In church, ladies' hats outnumbered our friends.

We were the minister's "young friends". He told us about love and called us "Richard and Stephen".

Were we the Princess in the Tower? The whole edifice rested on us, on her stiff dress and my 45-pin.

No-one could help us. With his shock of white hair and his many dog-collars, the minister arraigned us,

yeeping against the flesh like a dog in the manger, importuned, blundering, resentful, exploited.

He thought he was performing a rescue service - a fireman at midnight, two cats up a tree in heat.

Michael Hofmann

Gadfly bites

Robin Robbins

PETER HANNING (Editor)

The Phil Stories of W. S. Gilbert
25pp. Robson Books. £7.95.
0 80051 200 2

Low London has changed, one may think, on reading that "A gentleman walking through South Kensington at 3 in the dress of nothing whatever but trimmings, with the snow over his feet keep on the ground, would be sure to attract attention." Gilbert's burlar who preferred ten years' penal servitude to such exposure would nowadays even in daylight provoke no more public response than, perhaps, an approach from an earnest person with a clipboard seeking his opinion on the site of London's third airport. part from those poor in spirit who are ways with us, we have apostasized from the target of Ernest Dowson's satire who offered up all "mincingly To er one God - starlike Propriety".

Laughter, like academic politics, ves off bigbeards: when the monsters rove to be not just harmless but dead,

their dependent jokes lie dead alongside. Our anxieties, like the lice deserting the body of Thomas Becket, have transferred themselves from such transient phenomena as the Established Church and the aristocracy to other problems, doubtless just as trivial. Perhaps in Great Sporting and places where they sing, the money and marriages of bishops and curates are still hot topics, but few ribs will be tickled where Gilbert's gadfly seems to be going for cows no longer sacred, as in what is possibly the best crafted story of this collection, "An Elk of Love". Here it is not the irony about good living (too affectionate to rank as satire) that still amuses; merely the odd snatch of Dickensian character speech - the aged mental who confesses "I am that hard of hearing that cannons is reversing" - or the gleam of cliché: reversing wit in a daughter's response to her father's proposal to remarry: "Any wife of yours is a mamma of mine." The burlar who leaves his fortune to "the Society for Providing More Bishops" can hardly raise a grin with us who long ago saw the skull beneath skullidgery, any more than could Nurse Starke, with "her special Sunday frame of mind", in an age for which the hum of amazement long ago died out of humbuggery.

Hampered by the obsolescence of its targets, Gilbert's Victorian humour is further handicapped by the twee, and hamstrung by the sentimental. If we smile at "The Fairy's Dilemma" it is probably not at intended fun but at unintended pain: it was placed under the tutelage of a stout but experienced old Fairy, who had long retired from the active exercise of the profession, and who confined her energies to teaching polite accomplishments to half a dozen promising young fairies of good family. The retort of a Sligger Urquhart or Joe Orton would have been ribald and unshamed. And "Angela: an inverted love story" is strictly for those who read with a hanky in the other hand - indeed, for those whose bosoms glow and eyes prick automatically at that favourite Victorian word "little", this volume, with "a story of aristocracy and true love" that ends "And Little Woman kept the appointment", and another significantly entitled "Little Mm" could prove a satisfactorily bring Christmas present. But for those who expect the virtuosity of the opera librettist, or prefer their salt unwatereed, Gilbert's stories (along with the largely derivative yet inaccurate and sloppily written Introduction) had better have stayed lost.

Cash and culture

Louis Allen

THOMAS R. II. HAVENS

Artist and Patron in Postwar Japan: Dance, Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts, 1955-1980

324pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £18.70. 0 691 05363 4

Two billion dollars' worth of art changed hands in Tokyo in 1972, 90 per cent of it domestic product. That may have been a record, but even in 1980 the figures were \$750 million for Japanese works of art and \$250 million for foreign works. One and a quarter million people saw the 1965 'Tokusatsu' exhibition in six weeks: one and a half million people saw the Mona Lisa nine years later. Japan's dance ballerina Morishita Yoko has danced more classical roles than any other artist anywhere. The country has over 37,000 professional actors and dancers. Paid theatre admissions in Tokyo in 1980 reached nearly 8,000,000. 350,000 pianos and 40,000 violins are produced annually, to satisfy the needs of the one and a half million who lean the violin. There are nearly three quarters of a million students of traditional Japanese ballet singing. Six million people take classes in flower arrangement, over two million in tea ceremony. There are 30,000 licensed teachers of classical Japanese dance. Ballet teachers have three quarters of a million pupils, contemporary dance teachers 800,000 and classical Japanese dance teachers a million.

Statistics of this kind emerge from every chapter of Thomas Havens's *Artist and Patron in Postwar Japan*. His first encounter with Japanese art was in 1960, when he taught English conversation to a sloopy-eyed group of young geisha at the Hasegawa tea-house in Asakusa. During the following twenty years he has become well-known as a historian of nationalism and war, but his now subject is much less familiar: the financial structure of the visual arts performing arts since 1955. His study is derived from a set of interviews carried out in 1980 among performers, composers, painters, print-makers, museum directors and arts administrators: from patient dredging through official reports and statistical yearbooks and from newspaper files. The latter provide some of the more pleasant evidence; for example, news of a raid on the home of a leading Japanese teacher in 1981, when income tax officials found 120,000,000 yen in notes under the floorboards of an alcove, tastefully concealed beneath a vase of fresh flowers.

The cash was from grateful pupils, and is a feature of the *temple* or 'headmaster' system - which encourages and bedevils the artist's life in Japan. A distinguished master, passes his skill on to an apprentice, but because of the respect for the *senpai* (teacher) in Japanese society, where traditional arts may thrive under such a system - which guarantees flawless performance - innovation and creativity may suffer. Authority can be

more important than skill. But the Japanese people seem to accept it, and it is generously subsidized by the middle classes, who are, according to Havens, 'its financial rock'. (Since three-quarters of Japanese now regard themselves as middle-class, it is a solid rock).

It may of course be necessary, since student fees are a way of keeping artists alive. Public and private patronage exist, but neither is the rich resource it should be. The past three decades of economic expansion and reinvestment have not been noted for sensitivity to public relations as far as the arts are concerned, though with an increasingly educated public this will change. Meanwhile dance companies subsist on pupils' fees, as do the No theatre groups; others exist on state subvention, like the *buraku* (puppet theatre) or simply on faithful students, like *kabuki*. Modern theatre (*shingeki*) does not have such ample support, nor does ballet - one European teacher considers the Japanese physique to be unsuitable for ballet, in judgment which does not seem to be borne out in performance.

Where private patronage has been forthcoming is in the visual arts. Both company directors and the ordinary public prefer something tangible: it is better to own a sculpture than fund an orchestral performance, which is walled away on the night air. Firms such as Suntory Whisky or Bridgestone Tyres have founded galleries and museums. An official Agency for Cultural Affairs has existed since 1968, but it is bedevilled by a dual role, acting also as a National Trust for the preservation of historic monuments, a function which eats up two-thirds of its funds. The export of Japanese culture overseas is the responsibility of the Japan Foundation. But in 1976 the budget of similar West German foundations (such as the Goethe Institute) was six times larger, and that of the Alliance Française and the British Council was seven times larger than the Foundation's administration and programme budget. Yet in spite of the fact that there is little tradition of business patronage, and as little tax incentive as in Great Britain for private benefactors, Japan has relied on private organizations rather than on the state to maintain the arts. Of fifteen professional orchestras, fourteen are independently funded. It remains true that Japanese businesses spend three times as much money every day on expense accounts as they contribute to the arts in a year. The government agency claims to be more important for the arts than corporation or foundation giving, and indeed its budget has increased astronomically. At just under \$14 million when it was founded in 1968, it was spending over \$200 million twelve years later (when the US National Endowment for the Arts spent \$154 million).

As far as traditional theatre arts are concerned, the effect has been galvanic. The building of the Japanese National Theatre near the Palace Most in Miyazaki in 1966 offered a central site in its 630-seat small hall to *buraku*, which was and is a financial

sponge. (The rescue of *buraku*, Havens suggests, was partly due to foreign prodding, not dissimilar to Fenollosa's unearthing of valuable sculpture from a rubbish dump.) The larger hall seats 1,746, 100 less when *kabuki* is staged and a walkway needed through the audience. 650,000 people a year go through its doors.

Havens's book is most interesting on who fills the theatres. For commercial theatre productions, 80 per cent of the audience are women, usually fans of domestic soap opera on a groupouting; or often unmarried women returning from work. Matinee audiences are almost entirely made up of married housewives between forty and sixty. Couples tend not to go out together in the evening. The husband is glad to stay at home after a late return from work and he appears to occupy himself with his children and television.

On the other hand, avant-garde theatre such as Kara Jiro's Situation Theatre, pitched in his 'Red Tent' on a vacant lot in Tokyo, and satirizing a too materialistic post-war culture, plays to an annual audience of around 15,000 university students and women. But Kara's company and these like it are financially precarious and pay their actors very little. This is the price of nonconformity, for being, as another American scholar puts it, 'one of the few places where Japanese can speculate publicly and openly on ultimate, eschatological issues'. But Kara could, of course, work in far more comfortable sites if he wished. The spartan setting is what he desires.

Theatres are often filled by block bookings from audience associations. The *shingeki* (modern western theatre) was kept alive in the postwar years by trade union support because it had been the favoured expression of proletarian theatre in the 1930s and the tradition lingered into the 1940s and 50s. Now, of the two million people who go to *shingeki*, a quarter of them

every year will watch it from discounted block seating.

Musical events are created in some cases by politically sponsored groups, such as the Rön, or Workers Musical Association, founded in 1949, which had three quarters of a million members in the 1970s, though there are now fewer than 200,000. Rön was backed by the Japanese Communist Party, and naturally brought in a great number of performers from Eastern Europe. Also naturally, Japanese business set out to rival its achievements. The resulting Onkyo, or Musical Culture Association, which dates back to 1955, deliberately draws on a clientele of young clerical workers. Similarly, the para-religious Buddhist sect Soka Gakkai has an audience group, Min'on, with a membership of two million, which promotes a greater range of serious musical events than any other association - a little as if the Festival of Light were to sponsor the London Symphony Orchestra. Orchestras, in fact, are in trouble since radio station sponsorship has fallen away and they would be unable to survive without government subsidy. The star system, whereby foreign guest directors, with or without their orchestras, are imported for individual performances, is expensive, the zenith for Japanese music lovers having been Otto Klemperer and the Berlin Philharmonic, for which seats cost \$100 each.

Performers who aim at a career in classical western music (or just want to appear as amateurs in *hōga* recitals) pay heavily for the privilege. A kind of pedagogic mafia ensures that a well-known professor of violin will receive cash payments not only from his pupils but from his pupils' pupils. Flying visits all over Japan for a twenty-minute session with the most able of these (who will pay thousands of yen for the privilege) keep the contacts alive. To become a concert violinist at the age of

twenty-three may have cost around \$80,000 in fees and instruments. Pianos apart, other instruments come lower in the scale: 'the poor leave the cello'. But this has odd effects. Two-thirds of foreign music students in Vienna are Japanese, because it's cheaper to train there than at home in Tokyo.

Where money is plentiful it is often wrongly distributed. Grants are paid to artists' federations rather than to individual artists and so many visual artists are shut out from the grants to arts institutions which took up nearly half the budget for artistic innovation. Havens's view, creativity as an absolute is an idea foreign to the Japanese. The *temple* system transmits technical perfection but does not foster innovation. And in a society where direct confrontation is anathema, real criticism is a feeble plant. Newspaper critics are often reporters rather than arts specialists, and verbal ones at the space given to an exhibition may often be decided by the amount of the honorarium the critic expects to receive from the artist or gallery. Of course not all Japanese critics take bribes, but the system is sufficiently established for art criticism to have little edge.

Perhaps this is because it belongs to the field of literature, a conspicuous and no doubt intentional omission from this survey. For a complete knowledge of the impact of the post-war society, a further study is needed: novels and magazines, the reading habits of the most literate nation on earth, as well as the art of the cinema, which has provided a better vehicle for Japanese fiction than translation, should be examined. The Japanese are going to become aware, as we move further into the 1980s, that material prosperity, for which they have worked hard and which they deserve, is not enough. Only when this happens will art come more fully into its own.

The samurai's mission

Ian Nish

ERÖ SHINKICHI and MARTUS B. JANSEN (Translators)

My Thirty-Three Years' Dream: The Autobiography of Miyazaki Tōten 298pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £18. 0 691 05348 0

Miyazaki's autobiography was written in 1902 by a young man of thirty-two who was feeling disillusioned and frustrated by all aspects of his life, personal and political. He had set out as a *ronin*, a masterless samurai, with a strong mission to liberate Asia and, in particular, to get rid of the Ching dynasty in China. During his twenties he was involved in revolutionary activities and some forms of secret service work, and had many overseas adventures in Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and China. But his had given him no regular income; he had become detached from his family; he deserted his wife and children in Kyushu and lived with a succession of mistresses, securing funds wherever he conveniently could.

Miyazaki was born near Kumamoto in western Japan and educated there and in Tokyo. He flirted briefly with Christian teaching, but, as he writes here, 'I had narrowly succeeded in extricating myself from Christianity; I had concluded that it was impossible to save oneself or others by evangelism.' He became the friend of the exiled leader of the Korean independence movement, Kim Ok-kyun; but any joint enterprise that they might have entertained was thwarted by Kim's assassination. Miyazaki then went to work with an emigration company, operating from Japan to Thailand. We know remarkably little about these emigration operations; and Miyazaki's account is informative and suggestive. It gives us new clues about the Tokyo end of these businesses; what kind of Japanese emigrants they attracted; what (if any) arrangements were made

at destination; and how they were received by Thai businessmen. After two visits the project ended in disaster.

After the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5, Miyazaki's career was centred on China. He found a new patron in fnakai Ki, an up-and-coming politician with access to funds. Through fnakai, Miyazaki (with associates) received an assignment from the Japanese Foreign Ministry to investigate the state of secret societies in South China. Since many of these had revolutionary pretensions, this was an assignment for which he was well-qualified. It enabled him to make the acquaintance of key figures in the Hong Kong and Canton areas. In particular, it led to his friendship with Sun Wen (Yat-sen), who had already achieved some notoriety with his book *Kidnaped in London* (1897) and who continued to be an inspiration for Miyazaki for the rest of his life. Miyazaki was temporarily diverted into an enterprise to assist with arms for the Philippines independence movement in 1898-9; but this too was a failure and a disillusionment. Meanwhile the Hundred Days of Reform had taken place in China but had been defeated in a right-wing backlash. K'ang Yu-wei, who had inspired the reform movement, was afraid that he would be killed. Thanks to the help of Miyazaki (among others), he was able to enter Japan. The K'ang group and the Sun revolutionary group would not sink their differences and Miyazaki eventually chose to associate with Sun. He then sailed to Singapore, where he was imprisoned by the colonial police and eventually expelled both from there and from Hong Kong. When the Hui-chow revolution broke out in South China in 1900, Miyazaki and Sun were unable to influence its course.

Such a record of failure caused Miyazaki to interrupt his career as a revolutionary. In 1902 he wrote *My Thirty-three Years' Dream*, which was published in the press. After this he decided to learn the art of *naniwa-bushi* under a master and to break with his revolutionary associates. But this aspiration also failed. Miyazaki

returned to China after the Russo-Japanese war in order to assist Sun to bring down the Ching dynasty. After this was achieved in 1912 he supported the southern faction in the second and third revolutions there.

It is most useful to have an English translation of this dream-like story. Moreover, the translation is an outstanding one, which flows freely. Perhaps the reader unfamiliar with the intricacies of these underground activities would have benefited from the inclusion of more dates; ironically one of the few dates there is (1927) must be a misprint. If *My Thirty-three Years' Dream* is important to the general reader who wishes to understand Japan's attitude towards her continental neighbours, it is vital to Japanese and East Asian specialists, for the *Shina Raita* and their place in Japanese politics and in public sympathy in the later nineteenth century are full of meaning for contemporary Japan. To be sure, it is a minority cause. But we find echoes of it still in the adventurous activities of Colonel Tsuji Masanobu in our own times.

The Renaissance Institute, Sophia University, 7 Kio-cho Chiyoda-ku, 102 Tokyo, was founded in 1972 partly to correct 'the misconception... all too common in Japan' that if 'the Renaissance' was a period of light, then 'the Middle Ages' is a period of darkness. 'More positively, however, it is the aim of this Institute to interpret and explain that the spirit of life was at work in, as in the Renaissance, and in it still, at work today.' It publishes a yearly bulletin and a series of monographs of which are: *Shakespeare's Japan* by Robert Herrick; *Shakespeare's Japan* by Yoshiko Nagata; *Thomas More in Japan* by Akio Sawada; 'A study of Richard Crashaw' by Setsuko Nakao; *Thematic Themes in Shakespeare's Plays* by Peter Milward and 'Pageantry and Spectacle in Shakespeare' by Muro Fujita.

Applied humanism

Richard Tuck

HARRO HÖPFL

The Christiana Polity of John Calvin 203pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50. 0 521 24417 X

In the whole of sixteenth-century Europe, there was only one case of a fully accredited humanist winning a position of lasting and effective political authority within his state. What he engineered from that position was very far removed from the liberal and tolerant régime that might have been expected; for the humanist was John Calvin and his state was Geneva. The (to many modern eyes, exceedingly odd) fact that in some ways Geneva represented a natural application of humanist ideas was first pointed out by J. H. Hexter fifteen years ago in an article entitled 'Utopia and Geneva' - for despite Calvin's detestation of More there were undoubted similarities between the rather grim régimes invented by each of them. Now Harro Höpfl, a Lecturer in the Department of Politics at Lancaster University, has produced a book (also of some wit) which in many ways substantiates Hexter's insight.

What Höpfl shows is that the values of the early sixteenth-century republicans, given one particular twist, could relatively easily lead to the Calvinist polity. That twist was Calvin's emphasis on the disjunction between Church and State, and on the need to reconstruct the Church on a reformed and evangelical basis. Before he became an 'evangelical' (the term Höpfl uses throughout for 'Protestant' or 'reformer'), Calvin had been a straightforward humanist

scholar. His first publication was a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*, an enterprise which Erasmus had urged upon the scholars of his time. Calvin's conversion in no way subverted this earlier allegiance (particularly since, as Höpfl shows, there was nothing much of theological or ethical substance there to subvert); the intellectual world of the humanist remained his home. This is well illustrated by one fact which Höpfl makes particularly clear, namely that the notion of 'natural law' played only a minor role in Calvin's thought - 'natural law was systematically being ground into insignificance between the upper millstone of divine law and the netter millstone of positive law'.

This stress on what were really two kinds of positive law, one promulgated by God and the other by the City, was ominously characteristic of the humanist: Lorenzo Valla, indeed, had questioned whether there was any meaning in the category of natural law at all. The humanist felt much safer practising the secure science of textual exegesis on a code of laws, with both the Decalogue and the Corpus Juris Civilis receiving the same kind of treatment. One of the most interesting differences between Calvin and his followers, particularly the Huguenot theorists (differences towards which Höpfl is particularly sensitive), is precisely their much greater willingness to talk about natural law in at times an almost scholastic manner.

Calvin's actually rather sparse comments on political theory in his voluminous writings consistently endorse the values of the republican and oligarchic constitution; where there was no such constitution (as in the case of northern Europe, with its great and ancient monarchies) he was somewhat at sea. What he could not do, however, was call into question the validity of their constitutional forms -

the positivism of the humanist always held him back (again, unlike his followers). His operations at Geneva were facilitated by the fact that he shared the views of the 'Messieurs', the republican oligarchs who controlled the city; consequently, disentangling Calvin's own programme for the life of the city from that put forward by the equally 'virtuous' and interventionist oligarchs is a near-impossible task.

But Geneva was not in the end simply another urban republic: the particular character of its institutions made it a byword for 'Calvinist' repression. Höpfl shows clearly that the reason for this was its ecclesiastical organization, and that Calvin's originality consisted (as one might have guessed) in the thoroughness with which he implemented his theory of church government. One interesting thing which Höpfl points to in this context is that Calvinist church government is in fact oligarchical republicanism applied to the church: the kind of society which Calvin's church represented was very similar to a familiar humanist ideal (Utopia and Geneva, again). As Höpfl says, Calvin 'had not at all opted for some ecclesiastical version of monarchy; on the contrary, he clearly valued an aristocratic arrangement, where the ecclesiastical collectivity is governed by an aristocracy of merit, and the latter's own conduct is vouchered for by external and internal policing, but primarily by self-discipline'.

But while this is in some sense a humanist ideal, Calvin's theory of Church and State taken as a whole represents something unfamiliar at least to earlier humanists, for it emphasizes the separateness of the two spheres and the independence of the Church. This is not a theme which up to that time had figured prominently in the humanist writings - it is after all a

distinction which for obvious reasons is not to be found in any classical texts and which plays no part in ancient political theory. Nor is it of course a theme which is at all prominent in earlier Protestantism. Calvin's adumbration of it gave 'calvinism' its distinctive character, and more than anything else led later Protestants to 'bid John Calvin goodnight' (in the words of John Hales) and turn to the avowedly Erastian theories on offer from people like Grotius.

So odd is this aspect of Calvin's thought, and so heavy with significance for the history of the following century, that one would have welcomed a fuller explanation from Höpfl of why it took the form it did. Höpfl correctly points out that both Bucer and Capito independently came to broadly the same conclusion as Calvin, and he implies that there was an inherent momentum within Protestantism back to clericalism - the 'new clericalism' being distinguished from the old 'mainly by the greater thoroughness and probity of the new excretors'. It is interesting that on the question of church government both More and Calvin were eventually led to clericalism, albeit of different kinds. Though ecclesiastical issues were alien to Renaissance theorists, when they had to be faced the humanist seemed to have tended towards a clericalist position. Maybe ministers or priests came to be seen as a good bet for a virtuous élite - better, certainly, than the part-time philosophers in princely anterooms or city council chambers.

However, despite the uncertainty of Höpfl's treatment at this point, his book is in general entirely to be welcomed. He offers us the chance of understanding Calvin properly, and of seeing where a still important bit of the modern world has come from.

Great expectations

Bryan R. Wilson

B. W. BALL

The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief 247pp. Cambridge: James Clarke. £27.50. 0 221 67844 3

B. W. Ball's double purpose in this book is succinctly expressed in its title: to demonstrate the Protestant orthodoxy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (in the principal English college of which he teaches theology) and to establish how much the doctrines of that Church have in common with specifically English, Puritan precursors. He follows an exemplarily systematic procedure, examining in turn twelve cardinal theological issues as these were presented by a variety of English Puritan writers. It is more by implication than by actual demonstration that he indicates how converges with or is derived from these Puritan positions, for apart from a few lines of quotation at the head of each chapter, Ball leaves it to the reader to recognize (or to discover) just what the Seventh-day Adventist position is. Those seeking a more explicit exposition of Seventh-day Adventist teaching are directed to look elsewhere.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has today over three and a half million members throughout the world, who, at the current rate of expansion, particularly in the Third World, will grow to four million within the next few years. The Church was begun in the United States in 1860. Its early members had been persuaded before 1843 of the prediction of William Miller, a Baptist layman, of the imminent second coming, which he calculated would occur in 1843 or 1844. Some of those who experienced what Adventists themselves call 'the great disappointment' of those years, none the less clung to the essential validity of Miller's prophetic scheme (even

though he did not bring the Seventh-day Adventist Church into being). What those Christians believed was that the dates were indeed dates of importance, but that what had occurred was not the second coming of Jesus on earth, but his entry into the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, it behoved Christians to re-examine their obligations to prepare for the advent, and, largely through the inspiration of visions, they came to understand that God required obedience in particular to the fourth commandment that the sabbath should be observed on the seventh day of the week, and to the dietary requirements set forth in the Old Testament. The Church which was established was thus at once preoccupied with the Saturday sabbath, even though this and the rules of diet were merely secondary adjuncts to their original concern with the Second Coming.

The history of Seventh-day Adventism is no more than lightly alluded to in this book, but Ball does seek, albeit obliquely, to present a general apologetic for that Church's doctrines by illustrating that all its central teachings derive from the Puritan tradition. Ransacking the writings of Puritan divines from the seventeenth century onwards, Ball draws support from John Flavel, Bunyan, Milton, William Perkins, John Owen and others. He examines twelve issues, including such standard matters for conservative Protestants as the sufficiency of scripture; the status of Jesus; justification and sanctification; obedience to the requirements of the gospel; the relation of grace to the law. Everywhere, he displays a subtlety of judgment in the choice of his abundant quotations, and a skill in weaving them into a well argued case. Obviously, his task is more difficult on those issues in which Seventh-day Adventists manifestly depart from the general line of conservative Protestantism. Ball tackles the question of 'believer's baptism', although here he has to turn to less usual authorities since the Puritan writers on whom he chiefly relies were far from being uniformly convinced either about believer's baptism or total immersion. On the

seventh-day sabbath, his difficulties are even greater, although it is clear that he is understandably well acquainted with the literature in defence of that position - a literature produced largely by Adventists themselves. The status of the fourth commandment is central, of course, and Ball indicates the lengths to which the Roman Catholic theologians sometimes went to eliminate the obligation to observe the seventh day. The issue turns, ultimately, on the matter of the authority of scripture versus the authority of the Church, a subject for which Ball has laid the groundwork in earlier chapters. He sets forth the case for obedience to scripture, whilst seeking to avoid the charges of legalism and ritualism to which too scrupulous demands might expose him and his Church.

There is, however, a yet more testing issue: the nature of the soul. Seventh-day Adventists, together with other movements which canvass the thesis of an imminent second advent, reject on both scriptural and rational grounds, the doctrine of the soul. Man's nature is seen as immortal, but the soul is not. If he were, would it not be possible to God to have made man's soul immortal (in most cases) to cast that soul into eternal torment? Instead, Ball seeks to dispose of the concept of hell by providing alternative references, and to reassert the centrality to the Christian worldview of prophecy by the literal interpretation of bodily resurrection. The Mortalist viewpoint was not espoused by most Puritans, and many of those who did accept it were identified with disreputable parties of religious extremists, particularly so in the mid-seventeenth century. Ball has to invoke other sources here, but there were, as he carefully notes, reputable writers who made greater or lesser concessions to the point of view, and to Milton and Hobbes, and with side-glances at Newton, he finds intellectual respectability for the position he supports. There is, indeed, an English connection and a Puritan ancestry for Seventh-day Adventism.

With these steps taken, the

antecedents of adventist expectations in Puritan exegesis are demonstrated with less difficulty. The promise of the Scriptures cannot be gainsaid, and Ball is able to bring forward Puritans who made clear the centrality in their thought of the Second Advent and the outworking of biblical prophecies. Other, less dominant, concerns of the Seventh-day Adventists can also be shown to have had at least passing support from among the Puritans: thus the idea of maintaining the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost is neatly associated with the Mortalist view, and gives biblical warrant for the more-than-biblical preoccupation of Adventists with bodily health, temperance with respect to eating and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco.

Though much was derived from English Puritanism, there are in Seventh-day Adventist teaching distinctive doctrines that are entirely their own - otherwise it would scarcely be a separate denomination. There were very special circumstances about the movement's origins in the Millerite movement, and the Church had to accommodate the distinctive role played by Mrs Ellen White, who is regarded as having been a special vessel imbued with the spirit of prophecy, and who, by visionary experiences, validated some of the movement's distinguishing doctrines. Ball does provide, *ex post facto*, some defence of the Church's position on works - a position that has led others to abandon the principle of justification by grace alone. He says nothing of the even more contentious teaching of the investigative judgment, according to which Christ has been engaged in blotting out sin in the inner sanctuary in heaven prior to his second advent on earth. This teaching has recently come to be regarded with some suspicion even by some Seventh-day Adventists, as being inadequately supported by scripture. These issues, however, go beyond Dr Ball's self-prescribed brief of linking Adventist thought to a case which he amply and convincingly argues.

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Going west

Patrick Lindsay Bowles

BLAISE CENDRARS

Gald

Translated by Nina Rootes

128pp. Peter Owen. £7.50.

0 7206 0597 0

In the spring of 1834, Johann August Suter, a thirty-one-year-old bankrupt Swiss papermaker, deserted his wife and four children and set sail for America. Penniless and without prospects, his "professional contacts" were restricted to the fellow fugitives, swindlers and n'er-do-wells he was to meet on his journey. Through a combination of cunning or crooked business deals, prowess as an Indian fighter, indefatigable effort and extraordinary good luck, less than ten years later John Augustus Suter had become America's first millionaire and multi-millionaire, the most prosperous landowner in the United States, and the founder of a new country which he patriotically christened New Helvetia. Coming to join her husband at last, Anne Suter hears him described by strangers: "He is a king; he is an emperor. He rides on a white horse. The saddle is made of gold, the bit is gold, the stirrups, the spurs and even the horsehooves are of gold." By the time she arrives in Panama, one look of her hair has turned white. John Suter had been the poorest of men; he is now among the richest. Frau Suter dies, of exhaustion and amazement, on her husband's doorstep.

Well on his way to becoming "the richest man in the world", Suter is ruined in January 1848, when he is employed. James W. Marshall, discovers gold on Suter's property. Within months, squatters from all over the world have come to his vast El Dorado to prospect. A few months more and New Helvetia has evaporated, Suter's Garden of Eden has become the City of San Francisco. His house is burned down and his lands are taken over by much wealthier men with strange accents. One of his sons is murdered, another commits suicide. A peeper, Suter will spend the next thirty years of his life vainly trying to obtain some kind of compensation from the federal government in Washington. Irony and rage kill him on June 17, 1880 at the age of seventy-eight.

The vertiginous extremes of Suter's life-story place it squarely alongside a number of other "higher horror" stories: those, notably, of Job and

Midas. But his is also a quintessentially American tragedy, and *Gald* itself is perhaps best regarded as an American novel. No other figure of the nineteenth century—not even Lincoln—can have lived the American dream more literally or incarnated it more gloriously than did Suter. The pathfinder and the pioneer, the rugged individualist, the self-made man and the natural aristocrat all come together in the person of this insignificant Swiss immigrant.

Certain details of the story—Suter's Platonic self-image, his *Heimweh*, his demented Biblical exegeses, his membership of a wealthy communist religious sect at the end of his life—bear a superficial resemblance to the odyssey that has so often been traced by American royalty, from Jay Gatsby and Citizen Kane to Daniel K. Ludwig and Bob Dylan, whose absolute wealth and freedom have fuelled an already burning hatred of mere metaphorical aristocracy and turned them towards religion and babyhood. Howard Hughes, subsisting at the end on a child's diet of ice cream and biscuits; Elvis Presley, who died wearing diamonds and nappies; H. L. Hunt (the model for *Dallas*'s J.R.), who, padding around his office on all fours, once confided to a reporter, "I'm crazy about crawling"—each is an exemplary American career.

But few individuals can have lived the American nightmare more pitifully than Suter. He was left in the cold, a moral and material wreck. He died, like all poor people, wrong in the eyes of justice. His story is thus less like that of a Ford or a Rockefeller than a Lemuel Pitkin, whose dismantling Nathaniel West recounts in *A Cool Million*. Indeed Suter remains a major exhibit in what West called the American Museum of Hildeosties.

No one could have been better suited to tell Suter's story than his fellow-countryman and adventurer Blaise Cendrars, whose jeweller's eye was finely focused on all that glisters. (One of Cendrars' most compelling, if elusive dreams was "de rouler on Cadillac, d'avoir, des poules à Cadillacs, et de boire des scotch sans aude dans des boîtes de nuit à strip-tease.") The startling incongruity of the mock-naïve tone, which Cendrars recounts this long, cruel joke is supremely effective. First published in 1925, or four years before American riches to rags stories were to become commonplace, Cendrars' first novel remains a minor masterpiece. This fine new translation should give it its rightful place on the golden periphery of American letters.

Sinking and swimming

Anne Born

JAMES MCFARLANE (Editor)

Stories of Love and other Norwegian short stories

Translated by James McFarlane and Janet Garton

265pp. Oxford University Press.

£12.50.

0 19 212601 6

Mountains and sea are as vividly present in any human character in this generous collection of short stories, their harsh winter magnificence and power mellowed by the beauty of the northern summer. Yet these stories are not predominantly nature pieces: they illustrate a variety of human situations and also reveal the ability of Norwegian writers, perhaps even more isolated geographically than their Scandinavian neighbours, to make occasional use of general European cultural situations as well as native material.

There are thirty stories in the book, almost all of them very short. The writers, born between 1832 and 1941, include six women. The brevity enhances the variation in style and subject matter. Like poems, these concentrated tales achieve their object by using language with special intensity.

The collection is selected and

arranged with skill, not only to illustrate and follow the development of a century of writing, but also to develop some aspect of the preceding story with something like the succeeding one. Thus the first two stories, although quite unlike, are both about drowning at sea, and the third moves ashore only to the quayside. A group of love stories is placed together; but it is not a rigid pattern. Excellence and chronological order are the deciding factors.

During the five centuries prior to 1214 Norway was governed by Denmark and had virtually no literature of its own, although never forgetful of its proud Norse heritage. Subsequently, and until 1905, Norway had Swedish kings; so that the flowering of national culture in the nineteenth century is all the more remarkable. The gigantic figure of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson laid the foundations of modern Norwegian fiction, especially the short story. His chosen material was taken from the life of the country people who were to create the modern Norwegian state and whom he celebrated for their strength, perseverance, and courage in facing an often tragically hard way of life. The writers who followed him pursued these qualities in characters whose situations placed them in urban as well as rural settings, occasionally outside Norway itself, and on into the labyrinths of modern psychological and sociological problems.

One or two of these stories could be called narrative prose poems, among them Johan Falkberget's "Approaching Death" which rises to saga-like tragedy as the Lapp from a remote settlement struggles against cold and time to take back the medicine he has fetched for his

Light on dark

Bill Marshall

VICTOR SERGE

Midnight in the Century

Translated by Richard Greenman

251pp. Writers and Readers. £6.95.

0 904613 95 X

This is the first translation into English of a novel originally published in Paris in 1939 as *S'il est minuit dans le siècle*. Victor Serge was born in 1890 in Brussels; his ideological itinerary took in the Russian revolutionary humanism of his exiled parents, individualist anarchism in Paris prior to the First World War, conversion to Communism in his service to the Comintern in the early 1920s in Petrograd; and activism in the Left Opposition following Stalin's takeover in 1927. Serge's desire to present a synthesis of these trends creates a style and thrust distinct from the products of those writers who came to Communism late and then rejected it (*Darkness at Noon* is an obvious comparison here), and also of those who slavishly followed the precepts of "socialist realism".

The "midnight" of the title refers to the darkness of the year 1934, in which the novel is set; Stalin and Hitler have consolidated their totalitarian rule. In the Soviet Union, the state apparatus, after being almost at war with the peasantry, is about to make a political U-turn. Serge's narrative opens with Kostrov, a disgraced academic, being exiled to the remote Siberian town of Chernoe. A fraternal quintet of revolutionaries are already kicking out a living there the sixty-year-old Ryzhik, hero of the Civil War; Elkin, a former President of the Kiev Cheka; the Georgian student Avelli; a woman, Varvara; and an articulate young worker, Rodion. It is Kostrov's presence and capitulation to the Party edicts and capitulation to the Party chief, Fedosenko, to manufacture charges of conspiracy and sabotage against them. The dissidents are arrested and face probable extinction, but Fedosenko's plan backfires when Rodion, now grown to a lucid maturity, escapes to renew his life and commitment to their cause.

The style is for the most part that of documentary realism. Serge had been arrested in Leningrad in 1933 and sent to the famine-stricken town of Orenburg in the Urals, along with his teenage son Vlado (who, now an artist in Mexico—where Serge died in 1947—has contributed illustrations to this volume). Through accumulation of

detail and use of earthy, colloquial vocabulary and dialogue, Serge successfully re-creates the squalor of the prison machinery and the pervasiveness of material want. At the same time, the device of cutting rapidly from one scene or register to another, using extracts from official documents, newspapers and popular songs, places such things in their historical context.

Serge also includes lyrical passages on the Siberian landscapes, the stars, the eternal aspects of Russia. This recurring motif of stars and light serves to underpin the themes of individual consciousness and freedom, and to counteract the darkness of 1934. Rodion can thus proclaim with joy: "Soyons les hommes de miouit" (rather weakly rendered here, as "Midnight's where we have to live then"). Rodion's final journey through the wilderness, his near-death, rebirth, and vision of Russia, add a Messianic note to Serge's faith in regeneration.

This novel is also a penetrating, often ironic analysis of authority and bureaucracy. Serge evokes the drama of individual confrontation to show

Antiphonal anecdotage

Kevin Crossley-Holland

ERICA PEDRETTI

Stones

Translated by Judith L. Black

186pp. John Calder. £6.95.

0 7145 3929 5

Imagine inviting the most seasoned, robust and voluble of your neighbours to your house, making a friend of her, and tape recording her unending stream of reminiscences and comments on every aspect of day-to-day life. Now transcribe the tapes and punctuate them with your own reactions, and with the thoughts and memories they trigger off...

There you have Erica Pedretti's *Stones*. It is from first to last a fictional antiphony. Set in the poor part of a Swiss town (if that is not a contradiction in terms) in the Canton of Bern where Spanish and Italian immigrants live cheek-by-jowl with native Swiss, its principal attraction is Frau Gerster, a cheery old body who has seen it all. Irrepressible and bilthe, never doubting that whatever she says will command undivided interest, she talks—almost her whole life in detail and

Some writers have been commissioned by the architect to look at the question of life: how can I look ahead... I can only bring to life something I know, can only attempt to reconstruct using what futurology is not within my scope. By observing the present and comparing past experiences with new ones, by picking out a few details from the mass which surrounds me so that I can sketch one tiny segment of a reality, I get to understand that reality better.

The drab and reiterative language of the above passage is representative of the narrator's anxious and bumptious contributions throughout. Frau Gerster may rabbit on, but at least she has colour and energy.

Although Pedretti does indeed select and compare (and ring the changes neatly between her two protagonists), the novel still has the feel of *cinéma vérité*. This may be because Frau Gerster gives equal emphasis to everything great and small, and both she and the narrator invest their energies in a profusion of words. The sameness of tone works against the serious things that the author has to say about departure, the need for a sense of belonging, the social structure of chosen town and the problems of co-existence. The occasional bursts of vivid description, good anecdotes and *aperçus* do not really save the novel from being overtaken at times by the sense that dogs the depressive author: a "block of dead concrete".

Elie Wiesel's novel *The Testament* has recently been published in paperback (296pp. Penguin, £1.95). It is the story of a Polish Kossover, a Jew whose experiences as a partisan during the 1930s and in Spain during the Civil War, culminating in imprisonment in Russia, mirror the lives and deaths of Russian poets and novelists liquidated by Stalin in 1952.

how the political coincides with the personal. The interrogations between the bureaucratic and dissident which form the backbone of the novel, Fedosenko's crime of rape, and conflicts between officials on different rungs in the hierarchy, condemn the bureaucracy as counter-revolutionary.

The rapidity of style and blurring of narrative outlines, however, often produce moments when the political and treatment in a novel. *Midnight in the Century* in fact represents a period of transition; Serge's first three fictional works are more directly autobiographical, first-person narratives containing—partly through design and partly as a result of the conditions under which he was writing—discontinuous and episodic chunks of text. In 1936–9, Serge is writing as a free man, feeling his way to the maturity and polish of his novels *The Long Day*, *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*, the as yet untranslated *Les Années sans pain*, and the outstanding collection of short stories, *Le Tropicale et le nord*, in which his technique is suggestive rather than expository.

The ecclesiastical contribution

Peter Linehan

JAVIER FERNANDEZ CONDE

La Iglesia en la España de los siglos VIII-XIV

Two volumes, 605pp and 733pp.

Medicé Editorial, Catilla.

8 4220 1033 1

The appearance of this collaborative work—the first full-scale Spanish history of the medieval Spanish Church since Lafuente's *Historia eclesiástica de España* in the 1850s—is something of an event for Hispanists and medievalists alike. Comparison with its predecessor is instructive. Bemused as he was that he, a layman, should have written what generations of clerics had been planning and promising, Lafuente nonetheless knew how the substantial contributions, some thirty per cent of the entire work. Most centuries of the period covered, 711–1415, receive his attention. As he rightly observes, the Church—in the guise of the laity and lower clergy—proved notably indifferent to the momentous events of the early eighth century. (Since he has not felt himself obliged to reconcile the sharply differing views of his own contributors it is hardly surprising that he refrains from commenting on the disappointment of the expectations raised by the altogether more positive estimate of the social consequences of the conversion to Catholicism contained in the earlier volume of the History.) The revisionist interpretation of the "Reconquest", which advances social, anthropological and demographic explanations at the expense of religious motivation and the Visigothic tradition is touched on by Fernández Conde but more fully developed by J. Faci Lacasta.

Dr Faci's contributions deserve special mention for providing, with the editor's, the clearest description of the historiographical advances of the past twenty years—for example in his strenuously anti-nationalist and post-romantic account of the origins of Castile (in which, incidentally, the Church is not so much mentioned). Faci is unrelentingly modest, almost slavish in his adherence to the views of Professor Barbero and Vigil. At times the straining for novelty becomes tiresome: a monograph by the same author is described as "old yet interesting". Still, his message is important and clear: Spain was not different from Europe. In various long-controverted matters—feudalism in the eleventh century, the intellectual renaissance in the twelfth, monarchy in the fourteenth—peninsular developments paralleled those north of the Pyrenees; paralleled them without depending on them. Because the peninsula was feudalized by the end of the eleventh century the Spanish Church (or churches) stood in need of the same reforms as did the Western Church at large.

Here we have a history written by a committee which either never met or, if it did, did so only in order to agree not to seek agreement on the central issue of what is, or was, the Church. It is not that the editor was unaware of the problem. He makes a cleanish break of it at the outset. In his preface, with Lucien Febvre and Pope John XXIII, he discounts any history of the medieval Church, which confines its attention to "asuntos propiamente eclesiásticos". Ecclesiastical history is not the aggregate of the diocesan records. Nor is it the essence of the *episcopologio*, although some biographical material is permitted, of the familiar luminaries rather than of the often more revealing obscure. Social and cultural dimensions are to be allowed for, political and economic themes have to be located, and regardless of the nature of the Church and regardless of the validity of the assertion that "Infrapeninsular particularism" matter less than the unity of the pan-peninsular whole, a questionable thesis and one not adequately tested, by enjoining each nation or nation (other than the Iberian which hardly gets a look in) to its own historiography.

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SPAIN

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The manifesto is soon forgotten: there is too little attempt at a different study of the Church in different regions; too little consideration of the view of the past

in peninsular society. Do the authors concede Lafuente's point after all? Is the history of the Spanish Church indeed indistinguishable from the history of Christian Spain? Semantically speaking, of course, the Church was society; but that is not the reason advanced here or the justification offered for including accounts of Hispano-Muslim culture, epic and lyric, and—this presumably a sop to the military in the junta—the Las Navas campaign. (Would a history of the English Church contain minute descriptions of Hastings and Eddenden?) Only The Cid is missing. For once one would have welcomed a rather more elaborate methodological prologue.

That said, Fernández Conde is as much to be congratulated for superintending an operation which provides so many insights into the varied historical scholarship now being done in Spain as he is for his own substantial contributions, some thirty per cent of the entire work. Most centuries of the period covered, 711–1415, receive his attention. As he rightly observes, the Church—in the guise of the laity and lower clergy—proved notably indifferent to the momentous events of the early eighth century. (Since he has not felt himself obliged to reconcile the sharply differing views of his own contributors it is hardly surprising that he refrains from commenting on the disappointment of the expectations raised by the altogether more positive estimate of the social consequences of the conversion to Catholicism contained in the earlier volume of the History.) The revisionist interpretation of the "Reconquest", which advances social, anthropological and demographic explanations at the expense of religious motivation and the Visigothic tradition is touched on by Fernández Conde but more fully developed by J. Faci Lacasta.

Dr Faci's contributions deserve special mention for providing, with the editor's, the clearest description of the historiographical advances of the past twenty years—for example in his strenuously anti-nationalist and post-romantic account of the origins of Castile (in which, incidentally, the Church is not so much mentioned). Faci is unrelentingly modest, almost slavish in his adherence to the views of Professor Barbero and Vigil. At times the straining for novelty becomes tiresome: a monograph by the same author is described as "old yet interesting". Still, his message is important and clear: Spain was not different from Europe. In various long-controverted matters—feudalism in the eleventh century, the intellectual renaissance in the twelfth, monarchy in the fourteenth—peninsular developments paralleled those north of the Pyrenees; paralleled them without depending on them. Because the peninsula was feudalized by the end of the eleventh century the Spanish Church (or churches) stood in need of the same reforms as did the Western Church at large.

Here we have a history written by a committee which either never met or, if it did, did so only in order to agree not to seek agreement on the central issue of what is, or was, the Church. It is not that the editor was unaware of the problem. He makes a cleanish break of it at the outset. In his preface, with Lucien Febvre and Pope John XXIII, he discounts any history of the medieval Church, which confines its attention to "asuntos propiamente eclesiásticos". Ecclesiastical history is not the aggregate of the diocesan records. Nor is it the essence of the *episcopologio*, although some biographical material is permitted, of the familiar luminaries rather than of the often more revealing obscure. Social and cultural dimensions are to be allowed for, political and economic themes have to be located, and regardless of the nature of the Church and regardless of the validity of the assertion that "Infrapeninsular particularism" matter less than the unity of the pan-peninsular whole, a questionable thesis and one not adequately tested, by enjoining each nation or nation (other than the Iberian which hardly gets a look in) to its own historiography.

The manifesto is soon forgotten: there is too little attempt at a different study of the Church in different regions; too little consideration of the view of the past

which stigmatizes as "cowards" those Christians who continued to Islam in ninth-century Cordova and finds room for reflections on the damage done thereby to racial purity and for anecdotal asides on the emir's prolific progeny, the whole couched in a pronounced "Heroes of the Nations" style.

The distinguished historian of Spanish monasticism, A. Linage Conde, ought really to have been called to order and required to conform to the editorial discipline observed by his colleagues. In 150 pages bereft of footnotes and references he discusses the work of scholars whose names are missing from the bibliography attached to his (as to all) chapters and omits to mention where their views can be found. There is too great reverence for the self-indulgent by turns, Linage (who was the very best man for the job) gives the impression of addressing a seminar of aficionados from the depths of his study armchair. Understanding is not assisted by his use of open-ended quotes. The division of labour between him and Faci regarding different aspects of monasticism separates body and soul and so deprives the Cluniacs of life.

The eastern regions are not well served by A. Oliver Monserrat whose bit pieces—seven of them running to ten pages or fewer—hardly scratch the surface of the subject. He relies overmuch on dictionaries and the Spanish translation of Fliche-Martin. (In this he is not the sole offender. There is too great reverence for the authorities: even the egregious Faci depends on the Carlyles for Egidius Romanus and describes as "recent" a monograph published in 1947. Use is made of superannuated editions. A good deal of important non-Spanish scholarship is either ignored or—as in the case of work on the churches's supposed poverty in the thirteenth century—unquestioningly followed, on this occasion by Fernández Conde who falls to ask why—*¿por qué?*—as conditions had so materially improved a century later.)

There is a model account of the history of ethnic-religious minorities (by R. González) and, in time-honoured style, each part concludes with an essay on Art History (by Bango Toranzo); rich surveys both fully up-to-date, but undignified by so much as a chapter number—*ss* if the real historians wished to maintain their distance from such alien stuff—and sadly impoverished by the absence of any illustration. Finally, Don Demetrio Mansilla provides a survey

Above the snowline

James Kirkup

AGUSTI BARRTA

Hàlks d'Arnsal

147pp. Andorra-la-Vella: Serra

Airoso. 450 pts.

ARON CARRERA

Nívia

129pp. Andorra-la-Vella: Serra

Airoso. 350 pts.

To the millions of tourists who every year visit the great duty-free bazaar of Andorra la Vella, it comes as a surprise to learn that Andorra, this magnificently beautiful and fiercely individualistic country between France and Spain, has its own language and culture. *Poems per Andorra*, a 500-page anthology of Catalan poems about the Principality, recently published by the *Edició del Comarcal d'Andorra la Vella*, does something to correct this error. And something to new development in the spread of Catalan, and typically Andorran culture, is the inauguration of a new poetry series called *Col·lecció Nívia* by the *Edicions Serra Airoso* in the Principality. The first two well-produced volumes have recently appeared, one of them by the great Catalan poet, exiled for many years in Mexico, Agustí Bartra, who has just died. Shortly before his death he

Andorra's best-known ski resorts, Arnsal, and this collection of *hàlks* about that lovely village is his last work. The subjects are those of most Andorran poets—mountains, snow, the seasons, trees and the peculiarly impressive nature of the Andorran character and landscape. Of course, nature themes are universal, not particularly Andorran, but Bartra gives Andorra a distinctly Andorran atmosphere, at the same time preserving its profound individual character through the use of Catalan in these crisp, refined, brief stanzas that always observe strictly the 5-7-5 syllable count of the form:

Leu me die standing
as smoke less fast be changed
without knowing how.

Repetition is a problem throughout. The editor, again, is engagingly frank on this score. The degree of overlap is disguised by the wholly inadequate index of names and by the almost total absence of cross-references within the text. While, therefore, such subjects as the Visigothic tradition and diocesan geography receive double treatment, other important issues are left out of account. The crucially important Council of Coyanza (1053)—central to Faci's thesis—is neglected in the eleventh-century chapters and only alluded to when the story reaches the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Jeronimists crop up not where the reader would look for them, in Linage's chapter on the New Orders, but in Fernández Conde's account of Juan I of Castile's reforms. The beginnings of the cult of Ousadalupe, as influential in the fourteenth century as Santiago had been in the ninth, receive one scant paragraph. On royal manipulation of religious sentiment (of which the Guadalupe story is a prime example) and its counterpart, the ecclesiastical contribution to the development of Christian kingship, the text is silent. The absence of any discussion of canon law and of the role of Spanish canonists is deplorable, not least when so much good work is being done on the subject by Spanish scholars. Alfonso X's cultural activities are twice covered but in neither place is the distinctive contribution of the ecclesiastics considered.

The editor expresses the hope that, from consideration of the relationship of the medieval Church to the society in which it existed, "el lector cryente" may be able better to discern the way ahead for the Church now. Anything is possible. Yet it seems more likely that he will be left wondering what role the authors, collectively and individually, ascribe to the Church—now or then. Lafuente's mould is cracked beyond repair. But that view of the past, although mistaken, at least held together. A new synthesis has long been needed. By their very failure to address themselves to the central question the contributors to this volume have indicated something of the lie of the land. As to the synthesis itself, however—as Ortega y Gasset remarked of another flawed but noble enterprise fifty years ago—*no era eso*

the tensions between militant radicals and reformists or time-servers in the anarcho-syndicalist and socialist movements, and within the quasi-fascist Falange, are carefully described; as are the methods used by Franco, and by what approach and "disfraz" he commended the 200,000 called "the Steirer-bourgeois alliance", to exploit them. Some might say that the rôle of Soviet agents and "advisers", under orders to give the impression of aiding the workers' revolution while doing their damndest to afflict it, are too harshly condemned; and the Communist-inspired image of Premier Juan Negrín, that smooth advocate of "controlled democracy" as "the incarnation of the spirit of Republican resistance" takes some hard knocks. The achievements, and the sacrificial ordeals, of the International Brigades are put into revealing perspective. The military coverage is excellent, including a critique of the crucial, and lethal, failure of Republican commanders, influenced by political considerations, to wage a revolutionary war combining conventional techniques with large-scale partisan operations.

The tragic turmoil of the last weeks of the war when, with Franco's victory inevitable, a truly Popular Front of libertarians, socialists and disillusioned fellow-travellers at last turned on the Communists "savours" is explained with commendable lucidity. The concluding chapters on post-war repression and sporadic guerrilla resistance give Franco and his unattractive team too little credit for advancing, however fortuitously, the long-delayed bourgeois-industrial revolution. Compression due to ambitious scope and limited space makes for breathlessness at times. But along with some spitting words there are many sharp flashes of insight. The text is well and profusely illustrated: the total impact such that I wonder how many Spaniards, trapped in what Salvador de Madariaga called "the crucible of grief" underwent a spiritual conversion crisis—like Koestler under sentence of death in Seville or like Joaquín Riera, an ardent young Communist who, after many years in prisons and labour camps, became a Protestant pastor.

Volume Five in the six-volume Complete Edition of the works of the thirteenth-century religious poet, Agustí Bartra, has now been published (208pp., £12. Timesis Books, 0 7293 0599 4). It includes *El sacrificio de la misa*, *La Vida de Santa Orla* and *El Martirio de San Lorenzo*.

TLS FEBRUARY 4 1993: 117

Crucible of grief

David Mitchell

ANTONY BEEVOR

The Spanish Civil War

320pp. Orbis. £12.

0 85613 305 1

Since Ronald Fraser's mammoth, minutely contextualised slab of oral history, *Blood of Spain*, was published in 1979, it is perhaps not strictly accurate to claim, as does the jacket blurb, that this is the first full-length English-language history of the Spanish Civil War to appear since Franco's death. But the bold, clean, driving narrative offers a substantial, and substantially reliable, version of a sequence which, in Fraser and in Hugh Thomas's recently revised history, is extravagantly, and sometimes bewilderingly, thickened with footnotes and appendices.

With pardonable exaggeration, George Orwell told Arthur Koestler—who, as a former Comintern propaganda virtuoso, knew exactly what he meant—that "History stopped in 1936." The propaganda battle continues, and Antony Beevor, quoting a Spanish proverb ("history is a common meadow in which anyone can make hay"), suggests that the Civil War still carries such an emotional charge that utter impartiality is impossible. His brief is the daunting one of "explaining the enmities and alliances in terms of the three basic forces of conflict: right against left, centralists against regionalist, authoritarian against libertarian."

The tensions between militant radicals and reformists or time-servers in the anarcho-syndicalist and socialist movements, and within the quasi-fascist Falange, are carefully described; as are the methods used by Franco, and by what approach and "disfraz"

Traces in the tropics

C. Thurstan Shaw

FRANCIS VAN NOTEN

The Archaeology of Central Africa
By contributions by Daniel Cahen,
Pierre de Maret, Jan Moeyersons
and Emile Roche
152pp, 32 plates (8 in colour).
Graz: Akademische Druck. DM 108.
3 210 0184 3

Africanist archaeologists have been eagerly awaiting this book, announced some years ago, since there have been general accounts for southern, eastern, northern and western Africa, but no corresponding synthesis for the centre. ("Central Africa" here covers the Republic of Zaïre and the territories surrounding it - the Congo Republic, southern Cameroon, Gabon, Rjo Nguini, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, Burundi, and Angola.) However, the book under review is not the looked-for synthesis, for wisely the author (assisted by contributions from four colleagues at the Tervuren Museum) decided that attempting one at the present time would be premature. Central Africa as defined is a logical block of the continent on the map, but on the ground it is broken up into many different environments. Francis van Noten found it impossible to define large-scale cultural entities. This was one of the reasons why he decided not to provide distribution maps; another reason was that such maps would reflect the areas of archaeological activity as much as any genuine archaeological entities, with gaps in the places where no one has even looked. The only reference system for his map of sites is latitude and longitude, which are not given in the text; since there are no named topographical features either it is far from easy to find a named site; or to work out what sort of environment a given site lies in.

On the other hand, Van Noten's site-by-site treatment, giving information often unpublished or not easily accessible, is very valuable, and a great improvement on previous premature synthesizing. The book appears to be written for archaeologists already familiar with such terms as Stillbay, Djokocian, Lupemban, Tshitolian, Magosian and Wilton, as these are introduced without explanation. Many such archaeologists would have welcomed more detail, especially concerning various types of pottery. The book tends to become a catalogue of artifacts recovered, albeit with a lively appreciation of the importance of their stratigraphical context. The author himself is aware of how unsatisfactory this is, but it is as if he wanted to get the record down as a preliminary to more meaningful work in the future. His writing: "What should be done from now on is purely ethnographic", meaning that efforts should now be concentrated on designing research in such a way as to reconstruct as fully as possible from the archaeological end environmental data the way of life of the prehistoric people studied - an aim long since adopted by many archaeologists.

After a chapter on the environment, successive chapters deal with: the Stone Age in the North and East, the Stone Age in the West and South, the Iron Age in the North and East, the Iron Age in the West and South, and Rock Art. The excellent photographs are beautifully reproduced in a block at the end of the book, but was it necessary to arrange all Mrs Baele's beautiful line-drawings in the same way? Could they not have been printed on the appropriate pages of text at little extra expense? The limitation on the length of the text sometimes necessitates a very summary treatment of a site or a problem, but because of the headings under which the material is arranged, repetition sometimes wastes the precious space available.

The region treated is crucial to the question of the "Bantu diaspora", but no fresh light is shed on this; "debunking" of the supposed Urvuware putters from Tshikapa is not mentioned in this connection, but only elsewhere in the book and without the name Tshikapa being identified. One of the most astonishing things reported is the excavation of the royal tombs of Rwanda; one can wonder what the aim of this was and how permission was obtained. King Rutagira died in 1708.

Kenneth Kitchen

M. L. BIERBRIER

The Tomb-Builders of the Pharaohs
160pp with black-and-white illustrations. British Museum. £10.95
0 7141 8044 0

Countless tourists who have travelled up the Nile to see the spectacular monuments of Luxor (ancient Thebes) have also crossed that river to be bused up a desolate, sun-scorched valley and there be led in wonderment through the finely-carved and brilliantly-painted corridor-tombs of the greatest pharaohs of Egypt, dating from the later second millennium BC. Of that number, only a few visitors are taken to gaze briefly at the ruins of the workers' village now known as Deir el-Medina, less than a mile-south of that royal valley; or ever realize the close link between the two. For the mighty royal tombs were built not by anonymous slaves but by a special corps of (usually) well-paid workmen, seconded by extremely able craftsmen and artists. They are by no means anonymous - their personal monuments, people the world's museums, and many intimate, sometimes amusing, personal details of their lives are known to us from the book's written and sealed archives of this remarkable community.

This compact, elegant volume by Morris Bierbrier is the first presentation in English for a wider public of the life-style of this close-knit society of ancient Egyptian workmen. He first shows how the Valley-tombs were the successors to the pyramids, and instances other ancient workmen's villages. Then, in successive chapters, Dr Bierbrier introduces the reader to some of the leading characters in the

or 1768 (according to which oral tradition says he was killed), but the corpse was smoked and only buried in 1930 - to be dug up again by archaeologists less than fifty years later. The proposition that the king's death really took place round 1635 AD (sic) based on two ¹⁴C determinations, suggests an excessive faith in the reliability and exactitude of radiocarbon dates. Two of the royal burials are reported as follows: "The burials of Rwabugiri and his wife Kanjegers were much less spectacular. The king died in 1895 and his burial was excavated in 1973; he was accompanied by only two decorated pots. His queen died in 1933, and her grave was excavated in 1969; it contained three pots and some glass beads."

The following are some of the more important findings presented in the book:

A dry climate existed in Central Africa between 50,000 and 15,000 AD with a wet oscillation around 30,000 AD and a particularly dry phase around 18,000 AD. During this long dry period open vegetational communities extended greatly. From 12,000 AD a wet climate, particularly intense between 10,000 and 5,000 AD, produced a development of evergreen forest. This pattern accords with findings in neighbouring regions.

The radiocarbon dates from Mutapi Cave of about 40,000 AD for microliths and a "backing" technique, confirming

James Graham-Campbell

C. R. DODWELL

Anglo-Saxon Art: A new perspective
353pp. Manchester University Press.
£35.
0 7190 0861 1

Manchester University Press make claims for the scope of C. R. Dodwell's new literary - perspective on Anglo-Saxon art which goes well beyond the author's own stated aim. The Press are apparently under the delusion that they have given birth to "a comprehensive introduction" to Anglo-Saxon art "suitable for the student and general reader" - one, what is more, that they have the nerve to claim is "lavishly illustrated" (with 63 plates) and to retail at £35. To make this misleadingly described product look attractive, they have selected for the dust-jacket a photograph of a chalice which is not even of Anglo-Saxon workmanship.

So much for what this book is not. Let Professor Dodwell speak for himself. "The intention of this study is not to write a history of Anglo-Saxon art. It is to supplement such a history - to seek an understanding of Anglo-Saxon taste: to search out information about Anglo-Saxon artists: to see if the distortions given to Anglo-Saxon art by a given pattern of survivals can be corrected by an examination of the comments made about Anglo-Saxon art whilst it was still in balance and still a normal part of medieval society." Anglo-Saxon Art is thus a book for specialists, written by a specialist whose concern is to bring forward one aspect of the evidence alone - that of the written sources.

The tale that Dodwell has to tell is a sorry one of wholesale loss and destruction through the ages. Without the references brought together and discussed by him, we would have no knowledge whatsoever of many aspects of Anglo-Saxon art, particularly in the fields of textiles and church furnishings - such as life-size liturgical vessels (chalice, paten, etc.) or the intricate carvings of the Anglo-Saxon period. The book does not touch on the harsh realities of ornamental gold supplies available for the century, or the shift to merely gilt silver replacement by the eighth century, or silver in the ninth. His observation that gold must lie behind his observation that no outstanding pieces of Anglo-Saxon jewellery survive from Christian times, compared to the many fine examples from the first Anglo-Saxon centuries. So much too for the view once expressed by David Wilson that with a unique representation of the Fifth Series, known as the Fuller Brooch, is "fine enough to stand beside any of the world's great jewellery."

In short this work is a most welcome addition to that select number of good popular works on Ancient Egypt, on a subject of special interest; that can be recommended without hesitation to a wide public.

even earlier dates from Lesotho, compel serious consideration whether this technique is earlier in the southern half of Africa than anywhere in Eurasia.

The careful stratigraphic work done at Gombé Point (the site of Jean Colette's pioneer work in the 1930s) by reconstituting on to their parent cores the flakes struck from them, demonstrated that bioturbation was responsible for anything up to a metre of vertical transport, making nonsense of supposed stratigraphical entities, and of "stone-lines" as indicators of climatic conditions. This is a finding of importance for all the Kalahari Sands (and probably some other tropical) areas, and must invalidate the previously supposed succession of industries in the Lunda area.

In Rwanda evidence was found of the advent of a cattle-keeping people, perhaps the forebears of the Tutsi, around AD 1000. This date seems to mark the beginning of large-scale population movements, as elsewhere in East Africa.

The Kisalian culture of the Upperben depression, beginning in the eighth century AD and reaching its peak in the tenth, is extraordinarily rich, as attested by over 250 graves excavated; although crops were grown, chickens and goats kept and wild game hunted, the principal source of wealth, both for export and in protein for home consumption, derived from fishing;

Other specialists have started with the surviving material as a basis for considering Anglo-Saxon taste, but one will seek in vain in this volume for any reference to their published work. David Hinton, for instance, has suggested that the apparent lack of precious jewellery of late tenth to early eleventh-century date may perhaps be attributed to changing attitudes leading to a rejection of rich display in favour of lavishing wealth on the church. Whereas Michael Dodwell has suggested that the revaluation of the late tenth century may have meant that individuals could no longer afford to wear precious metals. It is to such debates that Dodwell's evidence may bring enlightenment, but it must not be regarded in isolation - what is needed now is integration.

There is much that is fascinating in this book and its hundred pages of notes (which include all the quotations from the sources in the original). Stimulating discussions include those on the nature of *pyramides* and *pyrphura*, while the suggestion that St Augustine was buried in a carved Gallo-Roman sarcophagus is intriguing. One cannot help but note a number of minor errors and inconsistencies (eg. between captions and text) and a number of outdated attributions are perpetuated, suggesting a certain reliance on older surveys rather than more recent literature on the artifacts themselves (eg. the belief that any of Acca's work can be proved to survive at Higham, that the Ganderahelm casket can be linked to Ely).

Students of Anglo-Saxon art will find a great debt to Professor Dodwell for providing them with such a rich accumulation of references and notes, now no excuse for anyone ignorant of literary sources when writing on the subject in the future. His book will also have a special value for students of early medieval textiles and ecclesiastical paraphernalia, whose losses have been particularly great.

If you want to know which plants were used to make soap-producing plants or what Jacob's rods were, or what the *Planis of the Bible* by Michael Zohar (223pp. Cambridge University Press, 1979, £5.21 249260) contains, this book is a treasure trove. It is a history of the plant world, which is both a historical and a botanical description of the plants mentioned in the Bible. As well as many quotations, there are 200 colour photographs taken in the field, and a bibliography, there are indexes of plant names and biblical references.

By happy coincidence Chaucer's *Boethius* in 1478, was just the Abbey from his shop. His *Boethius* for the Kent-connected poet (the excellent in mine opinion all other works in our English) no doubt

copper was imported from 200 km to the south and was widely used, not only for ornaments but also for implements. Most important is the evidence for social stratification and the emergence of a hierarchical society due entirely to indigenous development. On the copperbelt in Shaba evidence of indigenous copper exploitation has been found dating from the eleventh century onwards.

The region is not rich in rock art, although both petroglyphs and paintings occur. Nene are firmly dated, although the presence of Christian iconography in rock art along the coast suggests a sixteenth-century date. Others may be very much older, particularly those in the southern enlough to those with an early date at the Chifubwe Stream which is a neighbouring Zambia. However, the region has produced what may be the oldest wooden sculpture in sub-Saharan Africa, a representation of an animal with snout, eyes and round ears, from the Liavela stream central Angola, radiocarbon dated to the eighth century AD.

Francis Van Noten and his colleagues have performed a service in putting between covers so much valuable archaeological data about Central Africa, nowhere else so readily accessible. The book will be an essential work for every student of African archaeology. Meret's the joy that it lacks an index.

Resplendent in taste

James Graham-Campbell

C. R. DODWELL

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sale of private press books and ephemera

Sarah Bradford

Since January 1891, when William Morris inaugurated what was to be the most famous of modern hand-presses, the Kelmscott, at 16 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, and began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty, English private press books have attracted collectors for their aesthetic qualities and for the craftsmanship, dedication and indeed enthusiasm which produced them; "It was the essence of my undertaking to produce books which it would be a pleasure to look upon as pieces of art, and to arrange them in a way which would make them a pleasure to read." Morris continued in the *Notes*, or his *Notes on the Kelmscott Press*, a statement which encapsulates both the appeal and the underlying principle of private press printing.

Morris's Kelmscott and the major private presses of the golden age of English private printing from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of the Second World War were well represented in the John C. Power collection of Ephemera sold at Sotheby's in London on January 25.

Since the time of the major presses was good printing and paper, their booklets, prospectuses, specimen sheets and proofs offer the collector the opportunity of forming an extensive collection of private press printing at a relatively reasonable price. Joseph paid £1,320 for a collection of specimen sheets from thirty-eight Kelmscott books including three pages from the *Antiquities of the Jews* of Troye, the first appearance of the "Froy type" designed by Morris and inspired by the work of Schöffer, Mentelin and Zainer in the mid-fifteenth century, and £715 for six proof woodcut illustrations by Burne-Jones for the most celebrated of all private press books, the Kelmscott Chaucer. A collection of proofs including designs by Morris for ornamental borders with manuscript notes by Sydney Cockerell, Secretary to the Press, realized £605 to the Temple University Library, while Blackwell Rare Books bought three of the most fascinating Kelmscott lots. The first, a collection of Ephemera, included such evocative items as menus for the Annual Dinners of the Press and a single-leaf poem anathematized "Printed at the Kelmscott Press on the death of William Morris by some of his workers there, Chos. McLeish" (1605); while the second comprised correspondence relating to the Press with nine

autograph letters by Sydney Cockerell to the binders dealing with the minutiae of printing and binding Kelmscott books. A poignant letter refers to the last publications of the Press, Morris's *Notes*, or his *Notes on the Kelmscott Press*, issued in March 1898, eighteen months after his death: "The Note... will be issued with Love is Enough on W. M.'s birthday - & then will be the time to write EXPLICIT under the door of the Kelmscott Press...". Cockerell wrote. The last lot (£275) showed Morris as a collector whose taste in manuscripts and early books influenced his work as a designer of decoration and type for the Press. Morris encloses in a letter to a bookseller two leaves of a Sotheby's catalogue of Western Manuscripts which he has annotated beside one lot - "215 Catching dicky birds pictures rather good, borders pretty of their kind/writing bad (The rest of the Horae not worth a damn)", and the lot also included two leaves from Cockerell's autograph catalogue of Morris's library describing Reginald's *Lancelot du Lac*, 1513, and an early fourteenth-century Bible.

Not in the class of the Kelmscott but charming in its way for the original illustrations of its founder, Lucien Pissarro, was the Engravy Press which the artist and his wife set up at Epping in 1894. Lucien, the son of Camille, was attracted to England by Morris's Arts and Crafts movement with its revival of wood-engraving and printing, and was soon introduced to the production of the "book beautiful" by the talented Charles Rickerts, who founded the Vale Press in 1896. Rickerts, who designed three fonts of type for his press, once wrote the dedication letter of *The Sphinx* sent to him by Oscar Wilde, exclaiming "Vulgar beast!", his aesthetic sense as a printer outraged by the size and flamboyance of Wilde's signature which he considered defaced the page and upset its designed proportion. Both the Engravy and Vale presses were represented in two lots of prospectuses (the latter with some specimen leaves on vellum), the Engravy lot bought by Maggs for £380 and the Vale by Joseph for £520.

C. R. Ashbee, a pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement which inspired all the private presses, was the most ardent of the followers of Morris. He established the Guild of Handicraft in the Little Gt. Road in 1885, and twelve years later, the Essex House Press, employing two Albion presses from the recently defunct Kelmscott in an attempt to keep the great traditions

of Morris's press alive. Despite his admiration for Morris, Ashbee did not derive his inspiration from the early Renaissance printers, and the principal type found which he designed for the Press, known as the Endeavour, was redolent of Art Nouveau. Rota paid £715 for a lot which featured the three types used by the Press, and £385 for a lot comprising twenty-four autograph letters by Ashbee to the private press bibliographer G. S. Tomkinson. Writing of the pioneers in his field, Morris, Cobden-Sanderson, Hornby, Pissarro and the others, Ashbee told Tomkinson:

After all none of these six men who have done such good work in the making of books were merely printers. They were artists first in other lines of work. What makes their work of such significance to us is that for a brief moment in modern industrial development they made the "Printing Press" once again what it was in the days of the "incunabula" [sic] - the soul of the movement. . . . Your book as I understand it is a record of what will be, in the future, knitting all this together, and ought not the driving force, the idealism and inspiration behind, to have some place in that record?

T. J. Cobden-Sanderson was a visionary and an ideologue who with Emery Walker (whose lecture in November 1889 had inspired Morris's interest in type) founded the Doves Press in 1900. Many people consider the Doves, with its austere beautiful printed pages and vellum bindings by Sanderson, to be the finest of the private presses, and the Doves Bible ranks with the Kelmscott Chaucer and, possibly, the Ashendene folio Dante as the greatest of the books produced by the presses. Joseph paid £1,045 for a lot containing several proofs from the Doves Bible with rough lettering for the Genesis opening by Cobden-Sanderson which differ from the final version, and two pages from the other great Doves production, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, with a magnificent lettering by Edward Johnston. 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